A “Laboratory of Learning”: A Case Study of Alabama State College Laboratory High School in Historical Context, 1920-1960

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ABSTRACT

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In the first half of the twentieth century in the segregated South, Black laboratory schools began as “model,” “practice,” or “demonstration” schools that were at the heart of teacher training institutions at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Central to the core program, they were originally designed to develop college-ready students, demonstrate effective teaching practices, and provide practical application for student teachers. As part of a higher educational institution and under the supervision of a college or university president, a number of these schools evolved to “laboratory” high schools, playing a role in the development of African American education beyond their own local communities. As laboratories for learning, experimentation, and research, they participated in major cooperative studies and hosted workshops. They not only educated the pupils of the lab school and the student teachers from the institution, but also welcomed visitors from other high schools and colleges with a charge to influence Black education.

A case study of Alabama State College Laboratory School, 1920-1960, demonstrates the evolution of a lab high school as part of the core program at an HBCU and its distinctive characteristics of high graduation and college enrollment rates, well-educated teaching staff, and a comprehensive liberal arts curriculum. The collected oral histories from former graduates testify to the perception that a laboratory high school education was considered a privilege. The history of Alabama State College Laboratory High School provides evidence that Lab High offered a “Class A” education to Black youth in Alabama despite the oppressive White social
policies and practices in the South and contrary to the plentiful historical accounts of inferior secondary education during legalized segregation. As a progressive laboratory for learning, Alabama State College Lab High played a role in the development of education for African Americans in Alabama and throughout the South.
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the
former students of Alabama State College Laboratory High School,
and to my husband and family, who have been my foundation.
Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Research Setting

On a temperate fall afternoon in Montgomery, Alabama, nine former students of Alabama State College Laboratory High School gathered in a fellow alumna’s living room to discuss their recollections of “Lab High.” The conversation was lively, punctuated with bright bursts of laughter and earnest affirmations of “that’s right.” With an age range that spanned more than twenty-five years, the Lab High alumni savored the opportunity to discuss their Lab High School experiences. Rosalyn King, member of the Lab High class of 1958, hosted the gathering. A beautiful woman with a charismatic exuberance, retired after a bountiful career as a professional educator—teacher, principal, curriculum instructor, and assistant superintendent—exclaimed matter-of-factly, “At Lab High we knew since kindergarten we—and I mean all of us—were going to college.” Heads nodded, and a chorus of voices affirmed the “fact.” The planned “one hour or so” stretched to more than three hours, as the energy remained high and revelations about what it was like to be educated at Lab High happily continued.

Henry Johnson, M.D., not among the most talkative of the group, seized a momentary lull to offer an aspect of his Lab High education that he claimed had stayed with him throughout his

\[^1\text{Authors’ Exploratory Group Interview with nine ASC Laboratory High School graduates, September 20, 2008.}\]

\[^2\text{Rosalyn King (Lab High graduate, teacher, principal, and assistant superintendent), in discussion with the author, September 2008/March 2011.}\]
life. “You know,” he began with conviction, “there was Negro History Week and now there is Negro History Month, but at Lab High, we learned about the contributions of Blacks every day.” “That’s right,” responded the fellow alumni; and examples of such ensued. Georgette Norman, Director of the Rosa Parks Museum, sat at the edge of her seat and gestured animatedly as she spoke. “We had an excellent academic education,” she exclaimed. “Where is our history?” she challenged.  

Norman’s question is a good one. The educational experiences of students who attended laboratory high schools associated with historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) have rarely been mentioned in our histories. In the few times a laboratory school education has been referenced, it has been included as a biographical note of a celebrated scholar or civil rights activist—a high school education to be proud of. The educational experiences described by the former laboratory school students reflect an education that was one of privilege and prestige, and of an academic preparation that promised continued educational success.

Georgette Norman’s query might have been in response to what has now become a familiar description of African American education in the segregated South. For the last several years, The Best Test Preparation for the AP United States History Exam has apologetically presented a succinct description of education for African Americans in the first half of the twentieth century, stating that, “Sadly, most education facilities for Black children were anything but equal. Blacks

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3 Georgette Norman (Lab High graduate, M.A., Executive Director, Rosa Parks Museum, Montgomery, Alabama), in discussion with the author, September 2008/March 2011.

usually got dilapidated facilities, the worst teachers, and inferior education.” While that history lesson has a thick thread of truth, it doesn’t capture the richer, more complete historical narrative that includes the role of the laboratory schools.

Contemporary scholarly analyses of African American educational history have generally followed three broad trends. The first brought to light the gross inequities between the experiences of White and Black schooling for children, unearthing evidence of extreme discrimination in the unequal distribution of funding, facilities, materials, and teacher education for African Americans. The second trend continued to amass historical evidence of the desperate state of education for America’s Black citizens, and also asserted Black self-determination and agency within the oppressive environment of White racism. The third wave turned to case studies of individual high schools and for the first time in contemporary histories considered the important role that the African American community and culture brought to the educational experiences.

Scholars such as Frederick A. Rodgers and Robert G. Sherer argued that the value gleaned from the support of these “interdependent” communities was highly cherished. In 1994, David


8 “In studying the relationship between the black high school and its community, it is necessary to view the student, the school, and the community as components of a complex interdependent system … The black high school was a world of its own, with its own dynamic quality.” Frederick A. Rodgers, The Black High School and Its Community (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1975), 11, 15.
Cecelski documented an African American community’s hard fought battle to keep its high school in North Carolina open in the face of mandated integration. Cecelski presented a case of the collective dedication, energy, and courage of the Black community members to protect their school, depicting it as a place that celebrated the African American community’s heritage, customs, and culture.⁹

The few other published case studies of segregated education emphasized the theme of community and culture.¹⁰ Writing about their alma maters, Faustine Jones, Vanessa Siddle Walker, and Vivian and Curtis Morris, presented studies of academic achievement, “community-valued” schooling, and schools that provided “caring and nurturing environments.”¹¹

Scholarship from this most recent “culture and community” wave received both praise and criticism. Praise was earned for first studies that presented evidence of “valued” segregated education, commending the use of “community informants” and the primacy of “community and culture.”¹² Critics asserted that the “romanticized” or “nostalgic” view of schooling and community experiences lacked objective analysis. Yet, as Peter Novick adroitly asserted in his study That Noble Dream: The Objectivity Question and the American Historical Profession,


10 For a discussion of community studies, see V. P. Franklin and Carter Julian Savage, Cultural Capital and Black Education: African American Communities and the Funding of Black Schooling, 1865 to the Present (New York: Information Age Publishing, 2004).


“‘historical objectivity’ is not a single idea, but rather a sprawling collection of assumptions, attitudes, aspirations, and antipathies.”¹³ A precise tenet for clarifying what constitutes objective evidence remains “in dispute” among historians.¹⁴

It has become customary to see institutional case studies in the new millennium relying on personal testimonies to explore the “caring” and “nurturing” characteristics commonly reported in histories of segregated communities.¹⁵ Brought to life through oral histories, evidence of caring teachers, invested principals, and tight-knit communities reflects essential characteristics of successful education—abundant in the segregated Southern Black schools.¹⁶

A call for more case studies to capture this element of African American history has continued. And scholars have responded.¹⁷ Returning to segregation is not the message; the message is to listen to the histories and note that a shared community and culture resulted in

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¹⁴ Ibid. For commentary in historical context of this study on the illusion of “objective evidence” in African American culture and history see Lawrence D. Reddick, review of An Analysis of the Specific References to Negroes in Selected Curricula for Education of Teachers, by Edna M. Colson, Journal of Negro History 26, no. 4 (Oct., 1941): 525-527, 525.


creating an environment where invested parents, teachers, and adults actively supported their children’s education. Chronicling these lived experiences to preserve the cultural legacy enriches our historical perspectives of this American history.

A strong sense of community and a practiced celebration of the African American culture were evident in laboratory schools associated with historically Black colleges and universities. “You had no doubt that you were a part of a bigger community and you were expected to live up to [the ideals] of that community,” declared an Alabama State College Laboratory High School graduate. Kathy Dunn Jackson, a 1958 Laboratory High School graduate who returned to teach at Alabama State College after earning her doctorate at Michigan State University, remarked,

> If you’re from [Montgomery] and you mention that you went to Lab School, you’re immediately [recognized as having gotten a great education] – a privileged education.... If you mention, especially outside of the South, that you grew up in Alabama, [a common response is], “Oh, you poor dear.” ... I had a great education ... I was very privileged.

This notion of a “privileged” laboratory high school experience of which Dunn speaks and the “excellent” academic education reported by Georgette Norman and other lab school graduates begin to sculpt a more multifaceted historical perspective of segregated education. Students of lab schools went on to build careers in government service, law, medicine, and, largely, education.

Laboratory schools were an integral part of the teacher training institutions that educated the Black teaching force in the first half of the twentieth century. Analysis of these high schools reveals the strategy of Black educators to selectively adapt progressive educational philosophies and methodologies to address the distinctive needs of African American education in the South. The college preparatory lab high school was considered to be the exemplar of its time. To date,

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18 Former Lab High graduate, in discussion with the author, September 2008/March 2011.

19 Interview with Kathy Dunn Jackson (Lab High graduate, M.A., Ed.D., University Professor), in discussion with the author, September 2008; September 2009/March 2011.
an examination of college or university laboratory schools for African Americans has not been included in the historical portrait of African American education history.

**Historical Setting - Overview**

Black laboratory schools began as “model” or “practice” schools intended to provide a model of good teaching practices as part of “higher education” for teacher training. Many of these higher education institutions for African Americans were established in the last quarter of the nineteenth century as normal schools, colleges, and universities. While the aim of these institutions was higher learning, most of the students who came to them were not prepared for college-level work. This was common in the period.

According to a comprehensive study conducted in 1916 by Thomas Jesse Jones on behalf of the United States Bureau of Education, *Negro Education, A Study of the Private and Higher Schools for Colored People in the United States*, these institutions had more students enrolled in the preparatory classes at the elementary and secondary school level than at the college level course of study.\(^{20}\) Jones reported that there were only four states that provided a state normal school for teacher education – Alabama, Maryland, North Carolina, and Virginia – and, at the time of his study, they were “elementary and secondary in grade” and the “teacher training facilities [were] limited in all of them.”\(^{21}\) Included in his survey were state agricultural and mechanical [A&M] schools, which, in Jones’ opinion, had “not made adequate provision for teacher-training.” Jones was an advocate of industrial and manual training for African Americans, perceiving it as the “right ideal of Negro education” versus a liberal arts curriculum.\(^{22}\)


\(^{22}\) Jones, *Negro Education*, vol. 1:83.
As part of his 1916 analysis, Jones asserted that “with their [A&M schools’] agricultural and mechanical equipment they should be able to render a valuable service not only to the elementary schools but also to the high schools.” of which, Jones reported, only sixty-four public high schools existed in all of the Southern states.  

Jones’ report was not without controversy. It was lauded by some as “an epoch-making survey of Negro education … in bringing about the sane conception of education and improving race relationships.” Others deemed Jones’ report “misunderstood,” detrimentally fueling the flaming “conflict between higher education and manual training,” which had “occupied the attention of the Negro intellectuals” for years.

Buffeted by the raging debate on the most “suitable” program of study for African Americans and starving for funding, it was not unusual for institutions of the period to adopt names that conveyed both types of education—practical training and liberal arts—in an effort to gain federal funding allocated under the second Morrill Act of 1890. Alabama’s state-supported normal school, which was designed specifically as a teacher training institution in the liberal arts, was deemed ineligible for Morrill monies. Regardless of the name of the institution and which curriculum was emphasized, all of the higher education institutions taught African Americans how to teach others what they had learned. There was a desperate demand for teachers and a dearth of secondary schools. Land Grant institutions were teaching students how to become

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23 Ibid., vol. 1:42, 75; vol. 2:15; Jackson, “Rise of Teacher-Training,” 545.


25 A central aspect of the Morrill Act of 1890 was to provide funds for instruction in the teaching of agriculture and mechanic arts. W. H. Councill, president of Agricultural and Mechanical College; Booker T. Washington, principal of Tuskegee Institute; and William Paterson, president of State Normal School battled for the funds, which went to Councill. Morrill Act funding is discussed in greater detail in chapter two of this study. Also see Robert G. Sherer, Subordination or Liberation? The Development and Conflicting Theories of Black Education in Nineteenth Century Alabama (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1977), 20-43, 64; Robert G. Sherer, Black Education in Alabama, 1865-1901 (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997), 40-44.
teachers of the practical arts. Still, by “1916, only twelve students of college grade were enrolled in all of the seventeen [Land-Grant] colleges.”

For decades, these colleges accepted students far below college-level ability, with only a small fraction of students engaged in college-level work, which was the common practice for all colleges and universities in Alabama before 1920, White or Black. With non-existent secondary schools, and an insufficient number of teachers for the limited number of elementary schools, the colleges grew their own education force. On-campus model schools served a dual purpose. As the teacher training institutions increased their course programs of study to become junior colleges and then four-year degree granting institutions, one important function of these laboratory schools was to serve as feeder schools, providing qualified students to enter the Black colleges and universities.

Still, as evidenced by the pattern of education in the rest of the nation, secondary schools were a crucial step on the ladder of educational advancement, and they were desired by African Americans throughout the South. The difficulty lay in acquiring funding to support each level of education. High-quality elementary education led to success in secondary education, which then prepared students for higher education. However, not only were schools for African Americans few and far between, but higher education teacher training institutions, which prepared the needed qualified teachers, were struggling. To an economically depressed region with a history of an established racial hierarchy, funding for higher-level education went first to its White citizens. It was not until after the first few decades of the twentieth century that secondary education for African Americans began to experience noticeable growth.

By the 1930s, these Southern Black colleges eliminated formalized preparatory classes. Institutions maintained the practice or laboratory school for continued student development,

student teacher education, and pedagogical experimentation. Laboratory schools for African Americans were found in private colleges, land grant schools, and other state schools. Characteristics of these schools and their stated purposes varied. According to Felton Clark’s 1934 study of teacher-training programs for African Americans, “between 1871 and 1929 twenty-nine publicly-supported institutions of higher education engaged in the preparation of teachers in Negro schools” in the South. And by mid-1930, “Alabama State Teachers College [had] the honor of being one of America’s three designated state teachers colleges for Negroes.”

What was particularly striking was the place that these institutions established for themselves, as “they arose at a time when there was not only little interest in their advancement, but, in a majority of instances, absolute antagonism to their existence.”

In the teacher training institutions where they were maintained, the laboratory school occupied a “unique position.” It functioned as a distinct school that welcomed, educated, and graduated students from the community, in addition to educating the children of faculty members and serving as part of the college’s core teacher training program. For years, laboratory schools

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27 While preparatory courses continued, enrollment in the college-level program outpaced the enrollment of students in the preparatory classes.

28 Such schools were called “practice,” “demonstration” or “laboratory” schools, all designed to be a part of the teacher training program at the institution. Many might have begun as a “demonstration” school, such as the Southern University Laboratory School, and changed to “laboratory” at a later date.

29 Clark reported that four types existed: the land-grant college “with which is usually combined the state college, state university, state industrial school, state teachers college or state normal school; the state teachers college, the state normal school, and the liberal arts college. Felton G. Clark, The Control of State-Supported Teacher-Training Programs for Negroes (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934), 10, 18.

30 Bluefield Teachers College in West Virginia and Winston-Salem Teachers College in North Carolina were identified by Clark as the other two. Ibid., 18, 15.

31 Ibid., 30.


33 Ibid.
associated with HBCUs were the only secondary schools available in some areas. From these secondary school lab schools came students who were expected to enter Black colleges and universities—to “spread the intelligence” and advance the race.\(^\text{34}\) As an integral part of the teacher training institutions, at which the majority of the African American teachers had been trained, these laboratory schools were at the center of the development of African American education.\(^\text{35}\)

**Research Questions and Methodology**

This study analyzes the role of laboratory schools, asking, *What role, if any, did laboratory schools associated with historically Black colleges or universities (HBCUs) have in African American secondary education, 1920 to 1960?* That is the question that impels this research. This issue of the role of HBCU laboratory high schools will be explored through closely examining the case of the laboratory high school in Montgomery, Alabama within the context of the development of Black secondary education in the South, answering the question, *What role, if any, did Alabama State College Laboratory High School have in African American secondary education in Alabama and in the South, 1920-1960?* Springing from this central question are additional queries. What was distinctive about a laboratory school’s leadership in terms of education, philosophy, curriculum and teaching methodologies, or opportunity to influence educators? In a period when history tells us that it was difficult to acquire “good” schooling in the South, how were laboratory schools perceived within their own communities, regionally, and nationally? Why do former students consider a laboratory high school education a “privileged” education?


\(^{35}\)Robert Clinton Hatch, “A Program of In-Service Teacher Education: A Report of a Type B Project” (EdD diss., Teachers College, Columbia University, 1946).
The purpose of this research project, then, is to begin an analysis of laboratory high schools associated with historically Black colleges and universities in the context of the development of secondary education for African Americans in the South during the era of segregation. A case study of Alabama State College Laboratory School provides a close examination of the distinctive characteristics of a laboratory high school.

**Organization**

Part 1 of this study, which includes Chapters II and III, places laboratory schools in historical context of the development of secondary education for African Americans during the first half of the twentieth century. In order to better understand the role laboratory schools played in African American educational history, it is helpful to establish a familiarity with the historical landscape of the era and region. An overview of significant historical events that occurred is presented, contextualizing the social, political, and economic environment in which these schools were formed and developed.

Writing more than fifty years ago, Edgar Knight offered a timeless observation: “Education history, if properly understood, gives the educational past of any community, state or region meaning for the educational present and future.”

Knight’s reflection was part of his evaluation of the “economic, political and social influences in education” for African Americans. His caveat, “if properly understood,” begs the question of perspective and the importance of considering the historical context in the analyses. A nationally respected educator, Knight was a professor at the University of North Carolina from 1919 to 1953. Recognized as “one of the most

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notable educational historians in the United States,” Knight was perceived as a Southern advocate for African American public schooling.  

Yet, perusal of his scholarship reveals Knight’s judgment of Black education in the context of the time. Expressed as historical analysis, Knight’s appraisal came from his vantage point as an educational leader and scholar and was drawn from his White supremacist perspective as a Southerner. Knight asserted that the African American’s “presence retarded the advancement of schools and served also to lower political morals.” Striving to emphasize the most “practical” education for African Americans, Knight asserted that it was the “lack of the [N]egro’s industrial skill” that “served to retard the economic progress of the South.” As a solution to this, Knight recommended an elementary education that “related more closely to the daily life of the [N]egro, with more effective and practical instruction in agriculture, gardening, household arts, home-making and simple industries, health, sanitation, morality, cleanliness, and the fundamentals of good citizenship.” In his advocacy, Knight argued that “the facilities for training teachers for the [N]egro schools need[ed] to be increased, and more industrial and agricultural secondary schools need[ed] to be provided in all the Southern States.”

To offer a contrasting view in the same period, George Washington Trenholm, African American educator who had attended graduate school at the University of Chicago, enjoyed wide respect within the African American community. As President of Normal School for Colored Students in Montgomery, Alabama, Trenholm had established a laboratory high school on the campus of his institution in 1920, as part of the Junior College teacher training program. Trenholm promoted a liberal arts curriculum for his students that included secondary-level math,
English, history, and sciences. He stated that its purpose “differ[ed] from other kinds of schools in emphasizing the how and why as well as the what … in liberal scholastic attainment [original emphasis].”\footnote{“Statement of Purpose,” Bulletin 1920-21, State Normal School for Colored Students, Alabama State College University Special Collections, box 3, folder 3, Alabama State University (ASU) Archives. Hereafter, all primary, archival data pertaining to Alabama State University, Alabama State College Laboratory School, the institution’s presidents, and the Alabama State Teachers Association (ASTA) are taken from the ASU Archives unless otherwise noted.} This meant that not only were the laboratory school students pursuing the traditional liberal arts curriculum, but the Junior College student teachers were also learning how to teach the classical liberal arts curriculum.

To consider yet another view in the same period on a national level, George Counts and Harold Rugg of Teachers College, Columbia University were rattling the world of professional educators by challenging educational leaders to critically examine American schools and curriculum.\footnote{George S. Counts, first at the University of Chicago, spent the bulk of his career at Teachers College.} Considered “social reconstructionists,” Counts and Rugg argued for social justice and recognition of the undemocratic circumstances that produced educational disparities. Counts argued that secondary schools had been serving “the selected few,” based on social and economic standing.\footnote{George S. Counts, The Selective Character of American Secondary Education (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1922), 3; See also, Herbert Kliebard, The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893-1958 (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 184.} Rugg argued for a new approach for teaching children how to think about their society and history, specifically through a new social studies curriculum that interrogated social inequality.\footnote{Harold O. Rugg, “How Shall We Reconstruct the Social Studies Curriculum? An Open Letter to Professor Henry Johnson Commenting on Committee Procedure as Illustrated by the Report of the Joint Committee on History and Education for Citizenship,” Historical Outlook 12 (1921): 184–89.}

The intersection of these scholars’ perspectives is part of the landscape that forms the historical context of the period in which laboratory schools developed. As these historical accounts are examined, it is important to consider both the context of the period being studied
and the contemporary context for the researcher. How the past is represented, particularly the issue of highlighting social inequality, is “an expression and a source of power.”

Historical emphasis on the unbalanced economic and social powers of Southern White and Black citizens has continued to present African Americans as unfortunate players struggling to make the most out of their limited economic resources and educational opportunities.

This study analyzes the interrelationships of the period, especially examining state and federal funding policies for African American education, social constructs affecting the control African Americans had over their children’s education, scholars’ views of what type of curriculum “best suited” African American youth, and professional educators’ coalition strategies aimed at improving the quality of education for African Americans in the South. The laboratory schools were distinctive in that they were situated at the center of this intersection of social relationships.

Evidence is presented about where and how laboratory schools fit in to the historical narrative of African American education. Analysis of the “complicated and subtle”


46 In the seventeen Southern states, there were other schools that could boast of academic achievement such as Pearl High School in Tennessee and Dunbar High School in Arkansas. While exceptional, they were unlike lab schools in that they were not on the campus of a college or university, nor used as teacher training schools, among other distinctions, which will be discussed in greater detail in this study.
history of this period suggests that the “apparently powerless played significant roles” in the development of African American education.

The second part of this dissertation examines the institution of Alabama State College Laboratory High School, allowing for a detailed analysis of a laboratory school education. With historical context established, analysis of Lab High provides specific evidence of the laboratory school’s distinctive elements. On the foundation of the historical narrative of the development of African American secondary schools, Alabama State College Laboratory School emerges as an excellent example of the fundamental part laboratory schools played in the educational history of the South.

“Lab High” was located on the college campus and was a central aspect of Alabama State Teachers College. A review of the history of the institution is required to understand the laboratory school’s development and place in history, from its earliest forms as “Lincoln Normal School” in 1867 to “State Normal School and University for Colored Teachers and Students” in 1873, to its final name change, Alabama State University, in 1969. The school’s leadership, faculty, curriculum and courses of study, student demographics, educational outcomes, and physical plant are examined. Chapters IV and V focus on the history of the college, of which the laboratory school was a part, including the influential roles of its presidents. Chapter VI closely examines the laboratory school, which had a long history of contributing to the emerging Black middle class—future college educated citizens who went on to successful careers, and whose oral histories animate this important history.


Oral histories are considered a central aspect of this qualitative study. It is oral history that brings to life the importance of the African American community in shaping the experiences of their children and schools. The testimonies of those who lived this history convey the importance of racial identity, culture, and opportunity. Carol D. Lee posits in *Black Education: A Transformative Research and Action Agenda for the New Century* “that it is through everyday practices and institutional social structures ... in African American communities that [the] nexus of interrelated cultural models or belief systems are constructed.” The dynamics of those everyday practices and social structures are brought into view through oral histories. As applied to historians, the culture and social structures so meaningful in African American educational histories can be revealed by including oral histories as part of the historical research.

The oral histories of former laboratory school teachers and students allow this study to include the voices of those citizens who lived the history of Alabama State College Laboratory School and other laboratory schools in the Jim Crow era. Following traditional methods of historical investigation, key issues from these oral histories have been explicitly confirmed through other primary source materials. Relying solely on archival data would not only present an incomplete history of this period of American education during legal segregation, but it would also obscure the richness of African American educational history in general, and specifically Alabama educational history.

Illuminating the strategies, successes, and challenges of providing secondary education to Southern Black citizens, articles written by scholars of the period—players in the development of African American education—are used to uncover the contemporary influence of laboratory schools. Contemporary educational literature is probed for analytical support. Artifacts and archival material, such as organization reports and bulletins, government-sponsored studies and

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statistics, meeting proceedings, business correspondence, newspaper articles, yearbooks, and personal correspondence and notes, are also scrutinized to document this history.

The principal place for archival investigation was Montgomery, Alabama at the Alabama State University Archives, Special Collections, including the G.W. Trenholm papers, the H. C. Trenholm Papers, the Levi Watkins Papers, the ASTA Papers, and the Laboratory School Collection. Research has also been conducted at the Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama, and the Moorland Spingarn Research Center at Howard University, the H. C. Trenholm Collection.

More than fifty interviews were conducted. Interviewees included former students and teachers of Lab High, and some respondents served in both roles—student and teacher. Interviews were also conducted with students of other laboratory high schools, such as Southern University Laboratory High School. Responses were analyzed for frequency of key themes, which included perspectives on the laboratory high school educational experience.

References to education received in laboratory schools have only briefly appeared in individual biographical accounts. The research to date revealed a shared perception by those who attended lab schools, as well as the schools in the surrounding communities, that a lab school education was considered both prestigious and a privilege. Organized in two parts, the historical analysis of secondary education in the South during the first half of the twentieth century provides a picture of laboratory schools’ influential role in African American secondary education. Close examination of Alabama State College Laboratory School elucidates the distinctive nature of a laboratory school education, clarifying its role in the history of African American secondary education.

In a recent interview with a former lab school student, a professional poise and thoughtfulness could be discerned in the sure voice of eighty-nine-year-old Bertha Stewart. While certainly conversational and pleasant, Bertha was not loquacious or effusive in her recollections. It seemed that her intention was to be as truthful as possible; to resist
embellishment. Bertha said thoughtfully, “I would say that you were ‘privileged’ if you got to go to the lab school because it was a good school.” And then, after a momentary pause, she added, “You know, my father wasn’t an educated man [he attended school “maybe ‘till fifth grade’], but he knew that we weren’t getting what we were supposed to be getting…. Even though Lab School was far away, we knew about it…. Lab School had a big influence on the kids…. It was a privilege,” she stated, adding with conviction, “and we knew it at the time.”

Ms. Stewart went on to earn her B.A. in Education at Southern University and had a long career as a teacher. Her daughter also graduated from the laboratory school and went on to earn her B.S., M.B.A., and Ph.D., enjoying a career as a university professor.

As Dr. John W. Davis asserted in his address at the National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools annual conference in 1931, “We join all true scientists as well as other seekers after truth in believing that progress is evident when humanity is studied historically.” This research strives to document a “truth” about laboratory schools’ influence in African American educational history in the first half of the twentieth century, while seeking to remember the humanity of those who lived this history.

Explanation of Certain Terms, Abbreviations, and References

- “African American” and “Black” are used interchangeably.

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50 Bertha Stewart (1940 Southern University Laboratory High School graduate), in discussion with the author, October 5, 2011.


52 The term “Negro” is only used when quoted from the original text. Although African American scholar John Hope Franklin had won the battle with the White dominated press to capitalize the term “Negro,” the term “Negro” is now considered archaic and no longer used in historical analysis. See Robert L. Harris, Jr., “We Can Best Honor the Past … By Facing It Squarely, Honestly, and Above All, Openly,” in “The Legacy of Dr. John Hope Franklin,” *Journal of African American History* 94, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 391-397, 391.
• Alabama State University is the current name of the institution. In its 144 year history, it has undergone eight name changes:
  1. Lincoln Normal School – 1867
  2. State Normal School and University for Colored Students – 1874
  3. Alabama Colored People’s University – 1887
  4. Normal School for Colored Students – 1889
  5. State Teachers College – 1928
  6. Alabama State College for Negroes – 1946
  7. Alabama State College (ASC) – 1954
  8. Alabama State University – 1969
• Alabama State College Laboratory School is also referred to as:
  1. Alabama State College Laboratory High School
  2. Lab School
  3. Lab High – Note that former students often referred to the school, grades K-12, as “Lab High.” This study focuses on the role of the high school and the students’ associated experiences.

• ATA – American Teachers Association – The professional national teachers’ organization for African Americans. It was originally named the National Association of Colored Teachers, soon changing to National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools (NATCS), and then to ATA in 1937, which ultimately merged with the National Education Association in 1966.

• ASTA – Alabama State Teachers Association – The professional teachers association for African Americans in the state of Alabama, member of NATCS/ATA

• The “Eight-Year Study” is also referred to as:
  1. The Thirty School Study – referencing the thirty schools that participated in the study.
2. The Commission on the Relation of School and College, which is also known as the Aikin Commission, named for its chairman, Wilford Aikin. It was the first “Eight Year Study” Commission of the PEA in 1930.

- HBCU – Historically Black College or University

- “In discussion with author” refers to the conversations held during individual or small group interviews conducted by the author.

- Jesse Jones Study – refers to the study conducted by Thomas Jesse Jones and published in 1917. The proper name for the study is *Negro Education: A Study of the Private and High Schools for Negroes*, produced in two volumes. Scholars have frequently referred to the study as the “Jesse Jones Study.”

- “Laboratory” school – For this study that focuses on Black laboratory schools, it refers to a secondary school for African Americans that was part of an HBCU and located on an HBCU campus. It was intended to be used as a teaching and learning laboratory. These laboratory schools were originally called model, practice, or demonstration schools.

- NATCS – National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools.

- This organization changed its name to the American Teachers Association in 1937 and merged with the National Education Association in 1966.

- NEA – National Education Association.

- Oral History – refers to those stories, recollections, personal testimonies, and descriptions by former graduates of laboratory schools in the South collected during interviews with the author, conducted in person and/or by telephone. All oral history interviews were conducted by the author unless otherwise noted.

- PEA – The Progressive Education Association

- “Secondary School Study of Negro Schools” (SSSN) - also known as the “Black High School Study” or the “Black Schools Study”
• SACS – The Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, the regional accrediting body which included eleven states: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia

• Southern Region – Seventeen states in the South and the District of Columbia are often considered the “southern region.” These states passed laws requiring segregated schooling for their White and Black citizens: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. African Americans living in those states at midcentury represented eighty-one percent of all African Americans in the United States and twenty-three percent of the total population in those states, about nine million African Americans.

• Federal Emergency Relief Programs:
  o WPA – Works Progressive Administration
  o NYA – National Youth Administration
  o PWA – Progress Works Administration
LABORATORY SCHOOLS IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The American Negro is the product of America’s culture in every sense. His educational heritage is America’s educational heritage.¹

Chapter II

BEGINNINGS:

THE PROMISE OF SECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION

While the defiant South had been subdued by the Civil War, Southerners’ responses to Reconstruction were anything but calm. The problem of education was ablaze. Perceptions of what lay ahead seemed, for some, a world righting itself, filled with hope and promise; and for others, a world turned upside down, filled with dread and betrayal.

In 1866, nine freed men founded a school to train African American teachers in the small town of Marion, Alabama. By 1870, the new Lincoln Normal School was granted $486 in state assistance. The following year, a State Board of Education member, Peyton Finley, an African American, introduced a bill to establish a “university” for “colored people,” and on December 20, 1871, it was passed into state law, appropriating $1,250 to support the Normal School. It was an exciting time. Only three years earlier, Alabama had passed a new state constitution reversing the thirty-year-old law that had forbidden literacy instruction to African Americans.² The African American community was determined to take advantage of the new freedoms and open opportunities.


²In an effort to prevent possible uprising by those enslaved, Alabama passed a law in 1832 forbidding reading and writing instruction to any free or enslaved African American. Deep South states, such as Alabama, carried their penal laws longer than other states. “Alabama permitted up to one hundred stripes on the bare back of a slave who forged a pass or engaged in ‘riots, routs, unlawful assemblies, trespasses, and seditious speeches.’” Free Blacks were
American community was guardedly optimistic, as they partnered with a collection of White citizens to plan the future of their “State Normal School and University for the Education of Colored Teachers and Students,” which would uplift their citizens through education.

Others were not so enthusiastic. Long-familiar cultural constructs were threatened by new ideas about education. During the controversial period of Reconstruction, the majority of Alabama Whites opposed Black schooling. In 1865, “many whites had shown their opposition to black schools by burning buildings and threatening teachers.” In addition to the overt violence against property, the message was delivered in blows to personal income; “Alabama whites who employed ex-slaves as domestics would terminate the employment of servants whose children attended school.” Clearly, the dominant class of Whites in Alabama did not support education for its Black or White laborers. Bitterness, incompetence, and turmoil abounded. By 1870, the Governor condemned the state’s handling of its public schools as “shameful and reprehensible.”

According to historian Edgar Knight, the “unhappy reconstruction” period came to a close “in a

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3 Southern Reconstruction was considered the period following the Civil War when efforts were directed by Congress to reconstruct the South. In 1877, when the Northern troops were removed from all of their Southern posts it marked the official end of Reconstruction, 1865-1877. Despite any provision in the original bill of 1865 which established the Freedman’s Bureau as part of the Reconstruction efforts, the Bureau ultimately helped establish 4,239 schools (primarily elementary schools), teaching 247,333 students during Reconstruction. Of the more than five million dollars spent on education, $1,572,287 came from contributions, largely missionary associations, and the balance from the federal government as Bureau funds. See Knox, “Historical Sketch,” 446.

4 Sherer, Black Education in Alabama, 5.

5 Anderson, Education of Blacks, 23.


7 Knight, Public Education, 329.
complete reversal of the policy and process which marked its beginning." Knight reported that it had been a “grave error” to give the “indiscriminate gift of the ballot to men who were entirely unprepared for its intelligent use.” Fortunately, as Knight and others saw it, at the end of Reconstruction, the South seized the opportunity to right its upturned world and put things back into their proper places.

Knight’s report was largely true. At the close of Reconstruction, local and state legislators throughout the South went to work emasculating the Fourteenth and Fifteen Amendments. Within ten years, many states had laws in place that disenfranchised its poorer citizens, Black and White. Between 1895 and 1905, “the great roll-back of Black reconstruction took place.” As historian Allen Ballard concluded in his analysis of the period, “Southerners feared that education would lead to discontent with the serfdom they proposed to impose upon freed Blacks.” Most Whites felt threatened and organized groups to terrorize African Americans into accepting a subordinate status in the Jim Crow South. Lynching of Blacks reached an all-time high, and the KKK’s appalling and inhumane methods became acceptable to even moderate Whites.

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8 Ibid., 379; Also see Bullock, History of Negro Education, 38-44, 74-77.
9 Knight, Public Education, 329.
11 The 14th Amendment to the Constitution, ratified, July 9, 1868, granted citizenship to “all persons born or naturalized in the United States,” including former enslaved African Americans. It ensured the right for every citizen “life, liberty or property” and “equal protection of the laws.” The 15th Amendment to the Constitution, ratified, February 3, 1870, declared that the “right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition or servitude.” U.S. Constitution, amend. 14, sec. 2; U.S. Constitution, amend. 15, sec. 1.
12 Ballard, Education of Black Folk, 16. Jim Crow laws or Jim Crow etiquette were common practice.
13 Ibid., 12.
By the end of the century, State Constitutions had mandated legal segregation, among other
marginalizing laws, making clear that White and Black citizens would have separate social
experiences. Known as Jim Crow laws, these laws and social practices were formed to diminish
the rights of African Americans and ensure social White supremacy.\(^{15}\) For example, after passing
into law a new Alabama state constitution during Reconstruction, it was changed again in 1875,
mandating separate public schooling for the races:

Article XIII Section 1. The general assembly shall establish, organize, and maintain
a system of public schools throughout the state, for the equal benefit of the children
there of between the ages of seven and twenty-one years; but separate schools shall
be provided for the children of citizens of African descent.

Article XIV, Section 256: Separate schools shall be provided for white and colored
children, and no child of either race shall be permitted to attend a school of the other
race.\(^{16}\)

While some White Southerners supported education for African Americans as an
opportunity for social uplift, most promoted control of African Americans through schooling. A
local Alabama newspaper article offered insight into the White supremacist perspective. “The
more interest the whites take in Negro education,” the author declared, “the better they will be
able to control their former slaves.”\(^{17}\) While the South eventually accepted the notion of
educating its African American citizens, it was not based on embracing the promises of the
Fourteenth Amendment of “life, liberty, and … equal protection of the laws.”\(^{18}\) Most White
Southerners envisioned a system of education that emphasized manual labor and practical skills,

See also Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma, The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York, 1944),
560-561, 578-582.

\(^{16}\) Alabama Constitution, art. 13, sec. 1 of 1875; Alabama Constitution, art 14, sec. 26 of 1875.

\(^{17}\) Selma *Morning Times*, December 30, 1865, quoted in Sherer, *Black Education in Alabama*, 5; John G.
Myers, “The Education of the Alabama Freedmen During Presidential Reconstruction,” *Journal of Negro Education*

\(^{18}\) U.S. Constitution, amend. 14, sec. 2.
which, according to Knight, would help position “the [N]egro as an economic asset to the South and to the nation.”  

African Americans, on the other hand, demanded access to all levels of schooling, including liberal arts education. Having toiled for generations as enslaved workers, planting and harvesting crops, repairing and running machinery, and doing the cooking, cleaning, and laundry in the homes of White people, most African Americans were not interested in being “schooled” to learn how to labor. They wanted what Frederick Douglass had discovered years before, the power of education—the ability to read and write, to create and contribute, to take part in America’s bounty, which had been withheld from them before.

But as the twentieth century drew nearer, African American citizens looked at a landscape of broken promises and a veritable gauntlet of social, political, and economic oppression as they set their course for economic advancement. The KKK thundered through Southern communities terrorizing the Black communities, and explosive Supreme Court rulings shredded the rights that had been gained in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments.

In 1883, the first assault was leveled by the courts. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled the Civil Rights Act of 1875 unconstitutional on the grounds that Congress had gone beyond its authority by usurping the rights of the states to dictate their own laws. In 1896, in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the Supreme Court sanctioned “separate but equal” accommodations for African Americans, sanctioning the common White supremacist practices. As Supreme Court Justice Henry Brown wrote in his majority opinion, “if one race be inferior to the other socially, the Constitution of the United States cannot put them upon the same plane.”  

Three years later, the U.S. Supreme Court dealt another mighty blow in *Cumming v. Richmond County (GA) Board of Education*, which

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19 Knight, *Public Education*, 455.

allowed the closing of a public high school for Blacks due to fiscal restraints, while two public high schools for Whites remained open. Not only were African Americans’ rights and needs for secondary education disregarded, but the social policy of separate and unequal public schooling was confirmed.\textsuperscript{21} Then, in 1908, in \textit{Berea College v. Commonwealth of Kentucky}, the United States Supreme Court upheld a Kentucky state law forbidding interracial instruction at all schools and colleges in the state.\textsuperscript{22}

Despite these repressive actions, African Americans continued to press on and sought to educate themselves. Formal education was seen as necessary for success. Immediately upon emancipation, African Americans led the charge for public education, establishing common schools in every county of every Southern state.\textsuperscript{23} As a result of their collective demand for education, careful collaboration with White education leaders and philanthropic organizations, and ceaseless self-determination, they made remarkable advances.\textsuperscript{24} By 1890, thirty-two Black colleges and universities had been founded in the South, and by 1913, there was a total of forty-one. However, most of these institutions were “colleges” and “universities” in name only.

These institutions of “higher education” offered course work on an elementary and secondary level. Reports during the period (and for decades after) pointed out the “pitiable”

\textsuperscript{21} Cumming vs. Board of Education of Richmond County, 175 U.S. 528 (1899).

\textsuperscript{22} Berea College vs. Commonwealth of Kentucky, 211 U.S. 45 (1908).

\textsuperscript{23} W. E. B. Du Bois, Carter G. Woodson, Henry Bullock, James Anderson, and V.P. Franklin, among other historians, have argued that it was largely Black self-determination and agency that brought the common school system to the South. Writing in his analysis of Reconstruction in 1935, renowned sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois asserted that “Public education for all at public expense was, in the South, a Negro idea.” W. E. B. Du Bois, \textit{Black Reconstruction} (New York: Simon and Schuster Inc., 1935), 638.

\textsuperscript{24} For an analysis of self-determination and Black cultural capital, see Franklin and Savage, \textit{Cultural Capital and Black Education}, 38, 51; Franklin, \textit{Self-Determination}, 166-176; and Eric Anderson and Alfred Moss, Jr., \textit{Dangerous Donations: Northern Philanthropy and Southern Black Education, 1902-1930} (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999), 7-12.
“substandard” level at which many of these colleges were operating. A confluence of factors influenced the functioning of these institutions. One key factor was the limited number of public schools available to African Americans, especially secondary schools.

In 1890, according to the United States Commissioner of Education, eight states—Alabama, Delaware, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee—had no public secondary schools open to African Americans, except the secondary schools that were associated with institutions of higher education. Yet, according to the United States Bureau of Census for 1890, those eight states had approximately 413,000 African American children who were fifteen to nineteen years of age. While other Southern states did offer some public high schools, they were few and far between.

Twenty years later, in 1910, while there was improvement in the overall number of schools, secondary public education for African Americans had barely a pulse. Still in the Southern ethos of “deep-seated prejudice against public schools” in general, “and especially against educating the [N]egro,” while some states reported gains, Alabama and other Deep South states remained at the back, limping along. Data indicate that in these states, ninety-seven to almost ninety-nine percent of Black high school aged students were not enrolled in school.

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25 Jones, Negro Education. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Jesse Jones Report overtly promoted the Hampton-Tuskegee model of education, dismissing the value of or need for liberal arts education for African Americans.


27 John Alexander Hull Keith, William Chandler Bagley, The Nation and the Schools: A Study in the Application of the Principle of Federal Aid to Education in the United States (New York: MacMillan Company, 1920), 84. In some states the White percentage of enrolled students was similarly low compared to the national enrollment statistics. For example, between 1880 and 1910, Missouri made good strides, reporting in 1910, 10.5 percent of its population enrolled in high school, compared to 10.9 percent of Missouri’s White population. See Anderson, Education of Blacks, 191.

Table 1. High School Enrollment in Selected Southern States in 1910

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<td>Alabama</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>12.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>15.2</td>
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<td>Louisiana</td>
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<td>5.7</td>
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<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>10.1</td>
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<td>South Carolina</td>
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</table>

A study conducted by W. E. B. Du Bois and his staff at Atlanta University found that expenditures for schooling during this period told a similar story. For example, in Alabama, the Department of Education for Alabama reported school expenditures for Black public schooling as $329,094.83, compared to $2,417,378.57 spent on White public schools.\(^{29}\)

According to a survey of secondary schools conducted by Thomas Jesse Jones in 1916, on behalf of the U.S. Bureau of Education, twenty-three Southern cities with a population of twenty thousand or more had no Black public high school at all. This meant that more than forty-eight thousand African American youth had no access to a public high school education, whereas White students living in those same towns had access to anywhere from one to four public high schools.\(^{30}\)

In his analysis, Jones declared that more needed to be done to provide adequate facilities and training for African American education. He recommended an increase in the number of elementary schools as the best next step, emphasizing that “the most urgent need of the colored schools” was “trained teachers.” Highlighted in his opening “Summary of Educational Facilities”


was the problem that only four states in the entire nation maintained state normal schools to train black educators: Virginia, North Carolina, Maryland, and Alabama—the State Normal School of Montgomery. In short, Jones stated that his analysis was an earnest effort “to determine the real educational needs of the people and the extent to which the school work [had] been adapted to” meet those needs (emphasis added). An important component of his study was his “Recommendations,” which he included as a final section in each school’s analysis. Considered one of the primary goals of the study, Jones assessed each school for its worthiness to receive continued or additional funding. Jones made clear that his judgments were “only” based on “the promotion of the cause of the best and most practical education of all colored people for better living, civic righteousness, and industrial and economic efficiency.” Clearly, Jones’ conclusions had the power to enliven support for an institution or assign the death knell. His report also promoted the kind of education that the institutions “should” promote, which, in his opinion, was manual training—ensuring African Americans a subordinate position in society as laborers and service workers.

The Jesse Jones Report—A Firm Foundation or a Specious Study

Jesse Jones’ comprehensive Study of the Private and Higher Schools for Colored People has found an inimitable place in history. At the time of his writing, and for decades after, his work reached a wide audience. It has been seriously criticized, highly praised, and subsequently

31 Ibid., 18, 78-79, 324-425, 431-432; 623-624. The four state-supported normal schools to which Jones referenced were: State Normal School, Montgomery, Alabama; Maryland Normal and Industrial School, Bowie, MD; North Carolina State Colored Normal School, Elizabeth City, NC; Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute, Petersburg, VA. Alabama’s State Normal School under the direction of William Beverly, and Virginia Normal and Industrial Institute under the direction of J. M. Gandy were the only state supported normal schools that Jones reported as doing a full four-year high school course, in addition to teacher preparation.

32 Ibid., 7.

33 Ibid.
heavily relied upon by numerous researchers. One is hard pressed to pick up any historical analysis of first quarter to mid-twentieth century African American education and not find Jones’ study referenced in some manner.

Considered a “specialist in education of racial groups,” Jones conducted the study in cooperation with the Phelps-Stokes Fund and on behalf of the Department of Interior, United States Bureau of Education. Welsh-born, Thomas Jesse Jones had been the director of the research department and lecturer in sociology at Hampton Institute for eight years and named supervisor of the collection of “Negro Statistics” for the 1910 Census by the Census Bureau. 34 The Negro Education Study was a prodigious undertaking, and Jones’ two-volume report, packed full of statistics, tables, general summaries, and personal analyses, was published in 1917.

As part of his opening summary, which highlighted what he considered to be the salient points of his study, Jones emphasized the most “urgent need” for well-trained teachers. This put considerable pressure on the four state teacher training institutions, while also inferring the significant influence of those institutions’ presidents. The recognized pressing need for qualified Black teachers provided the opening through which more advanced education was possible. Because Jones’ study was a touchstone for evaluating the merits of African American educational institutions at a time when the secondary schools or laboratory schools were setting their direction, its place in African American educational history warrants closer inspection.

The two-volume report, Negro Education: A Study of the Private and Higher Schools for Colored People in the United States, often referred to as the “Jesse Jones Study,” came at a time when data on schooling for African Americans were extremely limited. For decades, historians bemoaned the fact that records from segregated schools were sorely lacking, if not missing completely. These private and public schools for African Americans varied in size and administrative structure and were supported by local and regional churches, various philanthropic organizations, concerned wealthy individuals, or the state, or by a combination of these. Jones’

34 Anderson and Moss, Dangerous Donation, 202-203.
painstaking research on the details of 791 individual schools and institutions, a truly noteworthy feat, proved a welcome gift for those concerned about African American education and a deleterious obstacle for others.

Particularly alluring to scholars was his narrative, as in the pithy description of the characteristics of a school in Alabama: “Music has a large place in the activities of the school. Industrial training is limited to plain sewing.”35 Similarly, his often biased perspective was revealed in his table headings. In addition to the general summaries provided for each institution, Jones included more than twenty-five pages of tables, presenting detailed statistical information. Included were data captured in such tables as “Public High Schools and Normal Schools,” along with “Distribution by states of both the unimportant and important private schools.”36

W. E. B. Du Bois, a brilliant Harvard-educated sociologist and “first social scientist of, for and by Afro-Americans,” published a series of studies on African American education known as the Atlanta University Studies. These rivaled the Jesse Jones study in terms of scope and detail. Historian Elliott Rudwick stated that Du Bois’ studies, College Bred Negro American (1900), Negro Artisan (1902), and Negro Church (1903), while not widely read, were reviewed in “important magazines” and had some effect on White citizens; however, he contended that the comprehensive studies, The Negro Common School (1901) and The Negro American and the Common Schools (1911), “never attained any wide circulation, either among Negroes or among whites.”37 Hence scores of scholars turned to the pages of Jones’ survey to collect detailed data on which to base their analyses.

Some of the schools were described quite succinctly, while others had multiple pages dedicated to narrative analysis. For example, State Normal School For Colored Students in Alabama, one of the four state teacher training institutions, got a little bit more than one page dedicated to it in Jones’ analysis. It was described as a school doing “four-year secondary course” work, including English, Latin, mathematics, science, history, education, drawing and modeling, and bookkeeping. In the “Recommendations” section, Jones advised that “adequate provision be made for teacher-training” in the “science, theory and practice of gardening, and hygiene and sanitation.”

Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, on the other hand, which was also in Alabama, earned six pages of Jones’ attention. Described as a “vocational school of secondary grade,” Jones highlighted the “genius of Booker T. Washington” in promoting the “educational value of manual labor.” Included among the recommendations, Jones advised “that the entrance requirements be raised” to better prepare “worthy pupils” to meet the industrial school’s standards. At the time of Jones’ report, Booker T. Washington, who died in 1915, was internationally recognized for successfully promoting the Hampton-Tuskegee emphasis on industrial education for Black teachers. The Hampton-Tuskegee influence in the direction of African American education is evident in Jones’ report.

In its period, the report most certainly achieved its over-arching goal to raise awareness of the status of Black education. Lauded by many as a “monumental” achievement, from others, it

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elicited “criticism amounting almost to vituperation.” Critical responses that garnered national attention were published by W. E. B. Du Bois and Carter G. Woodson, both within the period, as well as years later. Rightly identifying Jesse Jones’ educational philosophy as anchored to Hampton Institute’s ideal of Black industrial labor, Du Bois claimed that Jesse Jones’ recommendations for increased emphasis on manual labor training “determined to perpetuate the American Negro as a docile peasant and peon.” An educational plan that emphasized gardening over literature, Du Bois argued, was encouraging “young men not to hitch their wagons to a star but to hitch them to mules.” Furious over Jones’ belittling the “Negroes’ … childish love for ‘classics,”’ Du Bois contended that “the whole trend of Mr. Jones’ study and of his general recommendations [was] to make the higher training of Negroes practically difficult, if not impossible.”

There was no argument that the majority of the schools included in Jones’ study were “exceedingly meager” and functioning at a lower level than the “higher training” they aspired to. However, in a similar vein to Du Bois, Carter G. Woodson argued that the very schools Jones deemed as “questionable and unworthy of support” had “educated and inspired thousands of Negroes who would not have received any education at all if these schools had not been

41 Holmes, “Thomas Jesse Jones,” 479, 476. The quote “monumental” is attributed to N.C. Newbold, Director of Negro Education for the State Department of Public Instruction in North Carolina; however, this was a common accolade, as indicated in remarks made during the recognition of Jones’ twenty-five years of service to the Phelps-Stokes Fund.


established and maintained on a lower level.” Woodson considered Jones’ position and perspective “an evil in the life of the Negro.” He maintained that at the time of Jones’ study, these “Normal” Schools, “Colleges,” and “Universities” were just developing and struggling to grow into the promise of an institution of higher learning.

With the suggestion from Jones to curtail the emphasis on the “lofty ideals of a classic curriculum,” it proved extraordinarily difficult to prepare African American students to enter liberal arts colleges and universities. Moreover, based on Jones’ “Recommendations,” Northern money veered away from liberal arts training to support training that would prepare the Black laboring force.

Jones’ central message of what kind of education best suited African Americans attracted a wave of support from White philanthropists. Describing African Americans as “the chief labor supply” of the South, Jones explained in his study that “the Southern States … [would] never compete with other sections of the country until they increase[d] the efficiency of their labor through an effective system of industrial education for the colored people.” With the support of other prominent White educators, Jones proclaimed “that industrial education [was] what he [the African American] most need[ed].” Moreover, Jones questioned the too rapid elimination of the “aid, influence, and standards of white” teachers in the “colored schools,” noting that while “Booker T. Washington and other colored men and women in education” had contributed

47 Ibid., 108.
50 Ibid., vol. 1:83.
“value,” the “Negroes in America … should have the benefit of instruction from representatives of the white group [like Jesse Jones] at some point in their school lives.”

Arthur Preuss, writing in 1917, could not have agreed more. In an article in The Fortnightly Review, Preuss stated, “For the first time we now have definite information on this subject, furnished by Dr. Jesse Jones, expert in the education of racial groups.” Enlightened by the detailed study, Preuss concluded, “The fact of the whole matter is that it was a grievous blunder to free the slaves and then leave them to shift for themselves.” In other words, it was evident that Preuss seized on Jones’ plea in Volume I for more White teachers to return to their “unpleasing duty” of teaching in all-Black schools to help the ill-equipped Black teachers prepare the South’s laboring force. Preuss applauded Jones’ observations and advocated White supremacy and control of Black public schools.

Other White supremacist views appeared in newspapers throughout the South. J. C. Hemphill, editor of the Charleston News and Courier, and a representative of the Southern Associated Press, praised Dr. Jones’ study as being “so comprehensive in scope and so searching in character that there can be no further cause for misunderstanding the nature of the problem and its vital importance to the state,” regardless of any “natural prejudice” that “thoughtful folk” might have. Hemphill added, “The distinctive merit of the study is to be found in its wholly unpartisan character. It was undertaken not to establish the racial inferiority of the [N]egro but rather to impress the white people with the weight of the burden resting upon them.”

51 Ibid., 4.
52 Arthur Preuss, ed., Fortnightly Review 24 (July 15, 1917), St. Louis, Missouri, 216.
53 Ibid., 216.
56 Ibid.
contended in his essay that “the better white people of the South knew and appreciate[d] the importance of making their colored neighbors more efficient for the service which they perform[ed].” Crystallizing his meaning, Hemphill wrote, “One of the problems which teachers of the [N]egroes must face is how not to educate them out of their station.”

Educational leaders, too, weighed in on Jones’ achievement. Charles Johnson, Chairman of the Department of Sociology at Fisk University with a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, affirmed Jesse Jones’ substantial contribution to the advancement of education for African Americans. “It [Jones’ study] marked the beginning of a new era,” Johnson proclaimed optimistically, “discrediting the double cultural standard in both education and social life and pointed the way to new dreams through the bitter remnants of a sluggish past.”

But Charles Johnson’s comments, interpreted as favorable by some, were less about agreeing with the views of Jesse Jones and more about the study’s place in history, emphasizing the dual standards in Southern policies and practices. Johnson’s review was a call to recognize the double standard on which these schools were functioning. Jones’ flaying of the “substandard” schools invited a new era for all-Black schools to use a single standard for measuring educational needs and measures of success. It brought public awareness to the harsh reality that Black public schools were not receiving equal support, which consequently resulted in slow development. It was time for higher standards and equal financial support.

D. O. W. Holmes, professor at Howard University (who, in 1920, became Dean of the College of Education at Howard), similarly praised Jones’ study, claiming that it had “exposed [the] fraud” of certain colleges “claiming to be what [they were] not.” Howard University had earned the distinction of being cited in Jones’ study as one of “only three institutions” that

57 Ibid., 444. Hemphill’s articles were also highlighted in The Crisis in the review of African literature. Hemphill, “In the Looking Glass,” Crisis 15, no. 5 (March 1918), 233.


59 Ibid., 477.
“warranted the characterization of ‘college,’” one of “only” two medical colleges that offered “complete courses in medicine,” and the “only colored institution offering a full law course.”60 Howard University had been affirmed by Jones for its good work. Holmes saw the study as an opportunity to raise the bar for all of the all-Black institutions. Howard had done it, so others could as well. Jones had “call[ed] a spade a spade,” Holmes stated, and while that might have caused “consternation and sometimes … embarrassment” to certain institutions, it was a clarion call to leave behind the age of being satisfied with a lower standard.61 Holmes believed institutions that aimed to be colleges and universities would best serve African American education if they actually lived up to that standard. While Holmes’ aim might have been to motivate Black educators to strive for excellence, he missed the opportunity to provide the contextual perspective that some White “colleges” during this period similarly fell far short of providing a college-level course of study; yet, they were not publicly condemned as “frauds.”

In contrast, Carter G. Woodson was loath to find anything positive to say about Jones’ study. He referred to Jones’ views on Black education as “narrow-minded, short-sighted” and “undermining.”62 The power of the “Jesse Jones Study,” *Negro Education: A Study of the Private and Higher Schools for Colored People in the United States*, was that it trumpeted to the nation, Northern philanthropists, White Southerners, and educational leaders that the Black student was “limited” in his “ability to comprehend facts.” Accordingly, Jones forthrightly stated in Volume One that the “right ideal of Negro education … [was] to increase the Negro’s industrial efficiency.”63 He then devoted hundreds of pages to reinforce that message. Jones’ central recommendations were for a simple elementary education, which would lead to more focused

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60 Fisk was also among the three. Holmes, “Thomas Jesse Jones,” 477.

61 Ibid., 476.


studies in subjects such as gardening, manual training, domestic science, and agriculture, with the primary purpose of education being to prepare African Americans for a life of productive labor in the South to help the ailing economy. These were the “insights” Thomas Jesse Jones, the “specialist in the education of racial groups,” offered, and they were scattered throughout the report dozens and dozens of times.  

“When he said to not give here and do not help yonder,” Woodson opined, “the ‘philanthropic’ element heeded his biddings.” While certain industrial education institutions, such as Tuskegee, benefited from Jones’ praise, most schools suffered terribly. As Woodson observed, Thomas Jesse Jones was “catapulted into fame” by his study, and the impact of his judgments reverberated through the nation for decades because of the power he held as an executive in the Phelps-Stokes Foundation.

The dire circumstances of struggling, impoverished, and inadequate public educational systems for tens of thousands of African Americans throughout the South were irrefutable. But it is useful to consider what else was happening in education, which Jones dismissed as inconsequential. While Jones saw a future in agriculture and industrial training, there were African American educators who envisioned a professional teaching force that would nurture a future professional class of Black men and women in education, law, and medicine. In the shadow of the great Tuskegee machine, the State Normal School at Montgomery was steadfastly pursuing a Du Boisian model of education—a classic liberal arts education that was intended to produce future leaders. While the State Normal School for Colored Students in Montgomery, Alabama, was not the only teaching institution to eventually make central use of a laboratory

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64 Ibid., title page; Ballard, Education of Black Folk, 15.


66 Ibid.; Also see Anderson, Education of Blacks, 51, 250, 256-257.

67 Jones summarized, “Inadequacy and poverty are the outstanding characteristics of every type and grade of education for Negroes in the United States,” Jones, Negro Education, vol. 1:1, 7.
school, it provides a significant example of a worthy educational program that was missing from Jones’ analysis.

Jones had established the parameters of his study, with specific instruction to look for evidence of “agriculture, manual training, household arts, school accounts, buildings, and grounds.”68 Understanding this bias in favor of industrial-type education helps explain why the laboratory school would not have warranted attention by the visiting agent(s). Thus, the aims and emergent success of these schools were not examined by national scholars of the period, or for decades to come. Perhaps laboratory school students would have been among those “colored people” Jones perceived as demonstrating “indifference” to “the promise of industrial education.”69

While Jones interpreted many African Americans’ aversion to industrial education as indifference, Black education leaders such as William Beverly, President of Alabama’s State Normal School for Colored Students from 1915 to 1920, responded to and encouraged African Americans’ desires for a liberal arts education. Beverly, among the first graduates of Lincoln Normal School, had been recruited to return to teach at the newly named “State Normal School and University for the Education of Colored Teachers and Students” (although, in short order, the White community protested the reference to “university,” and it was renamed State Normal School for Colored Students).70

Passionate about building the teacher training institution, Beverly had brought the state normal school to a four-year state teacher training institute for African Americans, one of four in the nation. Beverly earned his master’s degree from Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island.


69 Ibid., 18.

70 University for the Education of Colored Teachers and Students was the name of the Alabama’s Normal school after it first received funding by the state in 1887. Due to White resistance to a school for African Americans being called a “University,” it was renamed State Normal School for Colored Students.
Island, and returned to Montgomery with a reinvigorated commitment to liberal arts. His approach to curriculum for his normal high school, the future laboratory school, exemplified Jones’ observation of “wide divergencies” in what constituted the “ideal … in the education of colored people.”

Beverly and Jones could not have been farther apart in their educational philosophies for African Americans. Jones saw “colored people” as a “chief labor force,” and Beverly saw future leaders of education. Embracing Du Bois’ philosophy that education was “dealing with Souls and not with Dollars,” Beverly’s ambition was to produce thinkers and leaders. Where Jones, Du Bois, and Beverly would have agreed was on the pressing need for Black teachers.

The policies and practices of Alabama’s boards of education were consistent with what Jones had observed in his study. The all-White boards and trustees with supervisory responsibility for both Black and White public schools would often leave the details of managing the schools “to the colored presidents of the institutions,” primarily due to general disinterest in their well-being. Beverly took full advantage of this. Navigating the turbulent waters of running an all-Black public teachers college in the “Cradle of the Confederacy,” Beverly tried to strike the balance of being a strong African American leader for his local community and people, while operating within the parameters of White supremacist control.

As President of the State Normal School for Colored Students, Beverly was making history of his own. In his laboratory school, Beverly emphasized English, literature, and history, using texts he had authored, including *History of Alabama, The English Guide to Oration*, and *Some Everyday Mistakes in the English Language*. His *History of Alabama* was not only the first

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71 Jones, *Negro Education*, vol. 1:3.
published history of Alabama, but it was also the first book authored by an African American accepted for use in Alabama public schools. This was a far cry from Jones’ recommendation to use English instruction to “broaden the pupil’s interest in agriculture.”

Negro Education: A Study of the Private and Higher Schools for Colored People in the United States was published in 1917, during a period of oppressive racism. As Louis Harlan shrewdly noted in his study, Separate and Unequal, “Educational reform within the context of racism partook of racism.” The Jesse Jones study clearly demonstrated White racist perspectives of the period, but more than that, it missed portraying an important element in African American educational efforts during that period. There is no doubt that the observations and recommendations of Jones’ study affected the direction of African American education for years, not only within his own period, but for decades beyond, as future historians relied on this window into the past. Jones ignored the significant inroads of many well-educated African American educators and their remarkable efforts in advancing African American education in the period. As early as 1915, Beverly remained steadfastly committed to developing one of the leading teacher training institutes in the segregated South.

The road for Beverly and others was not a smooth one, as the first few decades of the twentieth century were a time of immense transformation for all Americans. Specific to education, it heralded a turning point for American secondary education, and for African American education in particular. For Beverly’s Normal School for Colored Students, it offered a promise for the future. His secondary school, soon to become a “laboratory school,” would be a key player in influencing education in Alabama and throughout the South.


75 Jones, Negro Education, vol. 1:47.
As the nation entered the new century, leading educators were fervently engaged in improving their progressive educational theories, wrestling with which type of educational system and pedagogical approach might best address the nation’s diverse citizenry and fulfill and serve America’s promise and future. Against the backdrop of transformative scientific discoveries and technological inventions, there seemed to be universal agreement that education was the key to social progress. Men and women such as John Dewey, William H. Kilpatrick, Jane Addams, George Counts, and others grappled with theories of progressive educational reform.

Philosophical and methodological approaches to creating the most effective public school system were almost as diverse as the citizens they were designed to educate. Historian David Tyack argued that the most prominent theorists could be categorized into two broad groups, the “pedagogical progressives” and the “administrative progressives.” The former included the renowned John Dewey, who had created his laboratory for learning and teaching at the University of Chicago. Pedagogical progressives placed the child at the center of the learning experience, focusing on understanding how a child learned and linking school to democratic social living. Dewey considered his Laboratory School a “miniature community, an embryonic society” intended to produce future citizens in a democratic society. Administrative progressives considered educational solutions through organizational approaches to schooling, devising scientific techniques for large-scale measurement of student ability, and methods for managing the diverse learning needs of America’s children. As Tyack concluded, even into the twentieth century, it was evident that there was not “one best system,” and as methods were applied to


actual classrooms, competing theories overlapped and, occasionally, actually contradicted one another.\textsuperscript{79}

Reflecting the needs and concerns in American society, progressive educational ideas explored curriculum organized around industrial, agricultural, literary, and social issues—sometimes exclusive of the other, other times in combination. A prevalent thread running through progressive education was the question of schools as distinctive communities. While some accentuated the precious community of the classroom and its link to the larger democratic society, others emphasized greater efficiency and management and the goal to create productive citizens in a capitalistic society.\textsuperscript{80}

Between 1890 and 1920, high schools had become a common part of the education landscape. By 1930, almost 50 percent of high school age American youths were enrolled in secondary schools across the nation, and in the southern region, almost 40 percent of White youth.\textsuperscript{81} Within four years, according to the 1934 report from the Office of Education, the percent of enrolled high school age students reached 60, with the South boasting an enrollment of 54 percent among Whites.

\textbf{Separate and Unequal – Funding and Control of Black Secondary Education}

Because of segregation laws throughout the Southern states, African Americans were forbidden to attend school with their White neighbors.\textsuperscript{82} As the South developed its secondary

\textsuperscript{79} See Tyack, \textit{Managers of Virtue}, 114.

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 5, 7, 20; Kliebard, \textit{Struggle for Curriculum}, 24, 76-104.

\textsuperscript{81} National Survey of Secondary Education, \textit{Biennial Survey of Education in the United States}. See also Anderson, \textit{Education of Blacks}, 187.

\textsuperscript{82} The seventeen Southern states, plus the District of Columbia, passed laws requiring segregated schooling for their White and Black citizens: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. African Americans living in those states at midcentury represented eighty-one
school system, White school boards consistently dedicated the lion’s share of education funding to building, staffing, and maintaining its White high schools. For example, in the state of Alabama in 1912, public appropriations for teacher salaries on a per capita basis for each White child was $9.41 versus $1.78 for each Black child. In Alabama counties that had a larger African American population, appropriations for teacher salaries ranged from $12.53 per capita for Whites versus $1.56 for Blacks, to $23.42 for each White child versus $1.14 per capita for each Black child.\footnote{Jones, Negro Education, vol. 2:27.} For the school year 1929-1930, according to the U.S. Office of Education, the average allotment of funds dedicated to facilities “for the Negro pupil was $32.47,” compared to those for the “white [student of] $165.56.”\footnote{Walter G. Daniel, “Availability of Education for Negroes in the Secondary School,” Journal of Negro Education 16, no. 3 (1947): 450-58, 454.} In terms of the number of actual high schools, there were only eleven high schools per 1,000 African American pupils, versus thirty-four high schools per 1,000 White students.\footnote{Ambrose Caliver, United States Office of Education, Secondary Education for Negroes, 1932, no. 17 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1933), 6-7, 111.} This was actually a celebrated increase, considering that in 1917 the Negro Education study reported that only sixty-four public high schools existed in the entire Southern region to serve almost one million African American students between the ages of 15 and 19.\footnote{Jones, Negro Education, vol. 2:14. In 1910 the U.S. Census reported 961,887 African Americans between the ages of 15 and 17 living in the southern states. See U. S. Census Bureau, Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, vols. 2 and 3, Population, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1913), 1142, 1153, 1261-62.}

The racial environment for African Americans in the South in the first two decades of the twentieth century proved extremely challenging. Southern social, political, and economic
conditions directly impacted African Americans’ opportunity to take advantage of America’s promise of the “great equalizer,” the public schools.

In 1915, the Ku Klux Klan was reorganized in an effort to restore White supremacy and curb Black education. Based on acts of terrorism, the KKK’s mission was to instill fear into the minds and hearts of African Americans and to keep them subordinate. “Especially in Alabama,” historian Glenn Feldman asserted, the Klan “was intensely violent and morally intolerant.” The KKK increased in strength and by the mid-1920s had a national membership of more than four million. In Alabama, “Grand Dragon James Esdale claimed 150,000 members” in the KKK and an earned reputation for being “significantly more violent than other” Klans.

Also in 1915, William Beverly was appointed as the first Black president of Alabama’s State Normal School for Colored Students, having been hand-picked by the previous president, William Burns Paterson, who was regarded as the school’s founder. Within a few years, Beverly was well on his way to establishing a junior college. At the same time, African American war veterans returned to their Southern homes after having fought for democracy and freedom on foreign soil. In certain Southern communities, these veterans were greeted with intensified violence by Whites who worried that African Americans might demand their democratic rights on American soil. In a two-year period, between 1917 and 1919, the recorded number of

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87 Horace Mann, *Annual Reports of the Secretary of the Board of Education of Massachusetts for the Years 1845-1848* (Boston: Lee and Shepard Publishers, 1891), 251.


90 Ibid. Its membership dropped precipitously by the 1930s, to 30,000 members, largely due to the political powerhouse shutting it down; although, historian Glenn Feldman asserted that this was not a result of “principled opposition,” but a conflict of interests on issues other than shared feelings of racism. Ibid., 6-9, 89, 127, 210-211, 325-326.

91 Ibid., 20, 73, 76, 86, 325.
lynchings more than doubled.92 Meanwhile, Beverly accepted donated war-surplus materials and received approval to acquire the “old poor house” to be used to expand the school’s facilities.93

On the political scene in 1919, Alabama legislators voted to add compulsory school attendance to their constitution; it was the last state in the union to do so. Also in 1919, State Normal was placed under the governance of the state board as part of a larger restructuring of the public school system,” as were the White normal schools.94 However, Beverly or any African American was not permitted to attend school board meetings—standard policy for segregationist states. In Mississippi, U.S. Senator James K. Vardaman “openly proclaimed ‘white supremacy’” during his 1913 to 1918 term. And in Georgia, Congressman Tom Watson publicly “advocated the flogging and lynching of Negroes” in 1919.95 In 1920 in Alabama, the State Board of Education abruptly removed Beverly from his position as president of State Normal because of his plans to use discarded material to build a president’s home on the school’s campus in Montgomery. According to historian Charles Varner, Beverly had not asked permission from the board and was dismissed for “forgetting his place.”96 By 1922, Montgomery politician Bibb Graves narrowly missed getting the governor’s seat, but with the support of the Ku Klux Klan in 1926, he was successfully elected. Reported to be the “Exalted Cyclops” of the Montgomery chapter, historians have considered Graves a reformer.97 Among other improvements, Graves

92 Edward F. Burrows, working with his dissertation advisor, Merli Curti, found that in 1917, 36 lynchings were reported; in 1918, 60; and in 1919, 76. Edward F. Burrows, “The Commission on Interracial Cooperation, 1919-1944: A Case Study in the History of the Interracial Movement in the South,” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 1954), 42.


94 Ibid., 49.


96 Charles Varner, Jr., “William Beverly” (lecture, Alabama State University, n.d.).

97 Feldman, Politics, Society and the Klan in Alabama, 31.
expanded education and increased teachers’ salaries. However, few of these reforms benefited the Black population.  

With a less than robust economy, the South struggled to fund its public school systems, exacerbated by the burden of a dual system of education. Between 1870 and 1912, the Southern region ranked below the rest of the country in per capita wealth.  
This trend continued through the first half of the century. In 1922, the National Education Association sponsored a study conducted by John K. Norton, which analyzed the “ability of the states to support education.” Norton found that all seventeen Southern and border states ranked not only below the national median in “wealth per educable child,” but their median income was less than half of the average for the nation. These states were the least able to support education when compared to states in the nation that were supporting a single public school system, and yet they continued to attempt to fund separate and unequal school systems. In 1925, Maurice Leven published his study,  
*Income in the Various States,* as part of the National Bureau of Economic Research and found that all twelve Southern states ranked from 37th to 48th. In a study conducted five years later, entitled *Financing Schools in the South,* Fred McCuistion found that the Southern region still held the lowest rankings in the nation. According to these studies, Alabama was second to last,  

98 Ibid.  


nudging ahead of Mississippi, which ranked 48th. By 1928, Alabama had dropped to the lowest expenditures in the nation.

The difficulties of funding the dual system of public education were made more vivid in examining the dollar expenditures for the Southern states as compared to the national average. McCuistion’s study revealed that “the United States as a whole spent 40.26 per cent of all public revenue for education,” as compared to the average amount spent in the Southern states on their two separate school systems for White and Black children of 41.33 percent of their public revenue. A deeper analysis of those expenditures exposed the plight of African Americans, who had to bear the brunt of the South’s financial strains. McCuistion reported that the 41.33 percent of the public revenue represented an average of $47.79 spent on each enrolled student in eleven of the Southern states (not including Tennessee and Mississippi, which were included in the 13-state comparison above). Of that, more than 70 percent was allocated to White children: $35.22 was dispensed per White child and $12.57 per Black child for the 1929-30 academic year.

While McCuistion extolled “the fact that ten southern states spent $23,361,919 on Negro public schools,” he added the sobering observation that if the states’ monies would have been apportioned “without regard to race” for even the one school year (1928-1929), African American public schools would have benefited from almost $40 million more. Nevertheless, there was reason for some level of celebration regarding African American secondary school education. By 1929, the U.S. Office of Education reported that the enrollments in the all-Black

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105 Ibid., 13.

Still, African Americans were hard pressed to get funding to support their schools. Education proved an enormous part of the state’s budgets, and as the nation braced for the Depression, Southern Blacks were particularly hit hard. The spending disparities that had begun to narrow in the 1920s widened in the 1930s. In the early 1930s, as a result of the growing tendency to extend “vast expenditures for whites” in “transportation, modern buildings, elaborate equipment, and all sorts of auxiliaries,” African American students “receive[d] a smaller proportion of the public funds in the Southern States than they [had at] … any time in past history,” while expenditures on the schools for Whites continued with investments in modern brick buildings, substantial equipment, and transportation.\footnote{George B. Tindall, \textit{The Emergence of the New South, 1930-1945} (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press and The Littlefield Fund for Southern History of the University of Texas, 1967), 272; Bond, \textit{Education of the Negro}, 170-71.}

Adequate support by the local, state, and federal government for secondary schools for African Americans living in the South continued to be a serious challenge. Segregated public schools were controlled by city, county, and state boards of education. These governing bodies, along with the Superintendent, who had oversight for the administration of the schools and their budgets, were either elected by the community or appointed by those who held elected political positions in the community, county, or state. Since most African Americans were disfranchised
in Southern states, they did not have representation on the boards and found themselves unable to exercise control over their own schools.\textsuperscript{108}

These school boards, made up of only White Southerners, were charged with making decisions that directed the future education of their own children’s schools and those of their White neighbors. With insufficient funds to adequately raise the standards in either White or Black schools, it was no surprise that most of the resources were channeled to White schools. Consequently, funding was inadequate for Black public schools, which relied heavily on philanthropic support and contributions by African Americans to fill the gap.

A clear example of the educational inequalities was the decision not to build high schools for its Black citizens. While high schools in other regions of the United States became ubiquitous, in the Southern region they were lacking. Thus, construction of public high schools was primarily for White students. Black students either crowded into the lone high school that may have existed in the area or “graduated” after elementary school. Local and state boards refused to fund school transportation for African American children. In 1930, with a ratio of White children to African American children of 2 to 1, the transportation allotment for the Southern states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Texas was $5,594,942 for White high school students and a paltry $30,189 for Black students.\textsuperscript{109} Funding for school materials was also treated as \textit{de minimis}. African American students usually received the used and discarded school texts from the White schools. In some towns, African American educators added grades to elementary schools in an effort to meet the demand for secondary education, while trying not to “antagonize” the local school board.


Despite this lack of public support, secondary schooling for African Americans experienced substantial growth between 1915 and 1935, somewhat reflecting the explosive growth of high schools in the rest of the nation. This was largely due to philanthropic support and collective cultural capital raised by African Americans. In 1930, Ambrose Caliver, an alumnus of Fisk with a Ph.D. from Columbia University, was appointed by President Herbert Hoover to the newly created position of Senior Specialist in the Education of Negroes in the U.S. Office of Education. In this role, he conducted a number of studies on the status of education for African Americans, updating the broad survey of detailed statistics from the 1915-1916 data. In the study published in 1933 by the Office of Education, Caliver reported a total of 1,140 public high schools for African Americans. While only 506 of those public high schools offered four years of work, this was an improvement from only 45 four-year high schools that existed in all sixteen Southern states fifteen years earlier. Moreover, Caliver emphasized that the increase in Black high schools was largely due to “their own aspiration and initiative.”

While the increase was impressive, secondary schools to educate the Southern Black population were still far from sufficient. There were 211 high school-age African Americans for every 1 African American teacher, compared to a ratio of 60 to 1 White students per teacher. According to Dr. Caliver, in the sixteen Southern states, public high school enrollment was 101,998, which represented 9.5 percent of African Americans 15 to 19 years old living in the South. Thus, 90.5 percent, or 965,923 Black teens, were not enrolled in a public high school.

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110 Knox, “Historical Sketch”; Perry, History of ATA; Redcay, County Training Schools; Franklin and Savage, Cultural Capital and Black Education.


112 Blose and Caliver, Statistics of the Education of Negroes, (1938), 8; “The Committee views with admiration the impressive advance made by the colored people, largely by their own efforts, in their steady progress up from slavery, their steadily increasing attendance at high school and college, and their steadily rising standards of living.” U.S. National Advisory Committee on Education, Federal Relations to Education, part 1. Committee Findings and Recommendations, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1931) 25-26; Redcay, County Training Schools, 2.

Moreover, considering the relatively small number of private Black high schools reporting data, “conservatively,” there were “approximately 900,000 Negro boys and girls of high-school age” who were not in any high school at all.\textsuperscript{114} For example, in Alabama, only 5.8 percent of African Americans 15 to 19 years of age were enrolled in public high school.\textsuperscript{115} In Montgomery County, where African Americans made up 75 percent of the population, the Laboratory High School at the State Normal for Colored Students was the only four-year public high school in the city of Montgomery open to African Americans through 1937.\textsuperscript{116}

Edward Redcay stated in his report on Black education in 1935, \textit{County Training Schools and Public Secondary Education for Negroes in the South}, that only “two schools in Montgomery (City) offered two years of high school work to Negroes,” claiming that the “County Training School [wa]s the only [school] in the entire county offering four years of secondary work.”\textsuperscript{117} Redcay described the school as wanting, with “no central heating … no running water” or indoor toilet facilities.”\textsuperscript{118} Yet, Redcay highlighted the fact that the county training school’s principal demonstrated “progressive” teaching methods and held a master’s degree from Harvard.\textsuperscript{119} Interestingly, Redcay made no mention of the Class A accredited

\textsuperscript{114} Caliver reported that “only 9,868 Negro private high-school pupils were reported to the Office of Education,” for 1929-30 school-year. He also found that enrollment of teens in white public high schools was 33.5 percent. Ibid., 113-114; H. L. Trigg, “The Negro High School,” \textit{Journal of Negro Education} 3, no. 4 (Oct., 1934): 635-637, 636.

\textsuperscript{115} Caliver, \textit{Secondary Education}, 15. White enrollment was about 30 percent.


\textsuperscript{117} Redcay, \textit{County Training Schools}, 47.


\textsuperscript{119} Redcay, \textit{County Training Schools}, 47.
Laboratory School in Montgomery, which speaks to the point that public laboratory high schools were often overlooked by outside “inspectors” searching for evidence of successful industrial school training.¹²⁰

The existence of inequitable public funding, dilapidated school buildings, insufficient materials, and inadequate teacher training facilities was the result of the White racist policies and practices. Since the “public” schools were not allocated their fair share of public funding, it was not uncommon for Black schools to seek the support of outside philanthropic foundations and call on their community for additional support.¹²¹

Inseparable from funding was control. This pattern of inequitable states’ allocations to the Black and White schools demanded federal legislation, stipulating equitable distribution of funds in states with dual public school systems. The Morrill Act of 1890, often referred to as the Second Morrill Act, carried such an amendment, the first of its kind. It required states to share the federal appropriations.

That no money shall be paid out under this act to any state or territory for the support and maintenance of a college where a distinction of race or color is made in the admission of students, but the establishment and maintenance of such colleges separately for white and colored students shall be held to be a compliance with the provisions of this act if the funds received in such state or territory be equitably

¹²⁰ For years, historians have expressed concern regarding the accuracy of the data provided about Black schooling. “Statistics were unreliable.” Professionals often depended on others’ data to draw their conclusion. Redcay included in a section of his survey of Secondary Schools a listing of his sources: “records, correspondence, statistical and financial reports and audits, and document written by executive officers of the several philanthropic agencies who participated in the County Training School movement … contracts of county superintendents of schools” and “reports of State Superintendents of Education and stat school laws.” Redcay added that his research was supplemented by personal interviews, See Redcay, County Training Schools, 9. W. A. Robinson stated that accurate data on high schools for African Americans continued to be a problem. While “all of the states [were] publishing about Negro high schools in the regular state publications … some didn’t segregate … some [made] comparisons by races; but some of them still use[d] bulletins almost wholly devoted to specialized data on their white high schools, implying that it is not possible, or not important, to secure and publish similar information on the Negro high schools.” Robinson and Trenholm worked to educate and encourage the states to accept collection of all educational data as the state’s responsibility. Robinson, “Some Problems of Secondary Schools,” in “The Negro Adolescent and his Education,” Journal of Negro Education 9, no. 3 (July 1940):474-481, 477.

¹²¹ See Franklin and Savage, Cultural Capital and Black Education.
divided as hereinafter set forth … this act is an amendment [to the Morrill Act of 1862] … colored students shall be entitled to the benefits of this act and subject to its provisions, as much as it would have been if it had been included under the act of eighteen hundred and sixty-two, and the fulfillment of the foregoing provision in reference to separate colleges for white and colored students.”

While it contributed enormously to the development of Black higher education, it also cemented the segregationist policy for higher education institutions in the South.

Land-grant colleges were either given life or reinvigorated by the Morrill Act of 1890. The Second Morrill Act monies were specifically intended “for the more complete endowment and maintenance of colleges for the benefit of agriculture and the mechanic arts.” Within thirty-six months of the 1890 Morrill Act being passed into law, fifteen Black land-grant institutions accepted the Morrill Act terms, and by 1899, seventeen Southern institutions were designated as land-grant schools.

In addition to African Americans’ demand for education, pushing the development of Black higher education was the urgent need for more African American teachers. The normal schools that were created for teacher training had a difficult time meeting the exigent call for qualified teachers. These institutions struggled to not only produce a sufficient number of teachers to staff elementary schools, but also to appropriately prepare and train students for higher education. John W. Davis, president of West Virginia State College, concluded that considering the “absence of high schools for Negroes, the land-grant colleges for Negroes had to assume responsibility in this field, and, besides, had to train its own prospective college students.”

Desperate for funding, Black schools scrambled to identify their institutions accordingly, by name or through course programming, or both. John W. Davis dryly observed that a number of Black colleges took on somewhat awkward and unwieldy names in an effort to satisfy their

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122 Morrill Act 1890, 26 Stat. 417.
124 Ibid., 326.
own constituents, who demanded college-level teacher education programs in the liberal arts, and the White state educational officials who controlled the funds earmarked for industrial education.\textsuperscript{125} For example, South Carolina and Oklahoma established schools with names that trumpeted their dual purposes as a “college” or “university”: “The Colored Normal, Agricultural & Mechanical College of South Carolina” and Oklahoma’s “Colored Agricultural and Normal University.”

In Alabama, once it was accepted that the Morrill 1890 grant could go to a Black school that did not have “college” in its name; the funds went to Alabama’s State Agricultural and Mechanical Institute for Negroes in Huntsville. Alabama’s State Normal School for Colored Students was deemed ineligible for the funds because it had established itself as a normal school that prepared teachers in the liberal arts and did not teach agriculture or “mechanic arts.”\textsuperscript{126}

Despite the fact that these institutions adjusted their course programs and/or names to feature “agriculture and mechanic arts” education, a number of these land-grant institutions actually offered a strong liberal arts curriculum in addition to the industrial arts focus. A central function of these institutions was to offer teacher-training for the state’s Black public elementary schools.\textsuperscript{127} John W. Davis’ West Virginia State College grew into one of the “outstanding

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 315, 317.

\textsuperscript{126} William Hooper Councill, president of State A&M Institute for Negroes, successfully wrested away the Morrill funds from both the State Normal School and Booker T. Washington’s, Tuskegee Institute, after a rather cantankerous political scuffle. Part of his argument was that State Normal School did not teach agriculture and manual arts, a stipulation of the Morrill Act 1890. See Sherer, \textit{Subordination or Liberation}, 29, 40-43, 64; Sherer, \textit{Black Education in Alabama}, 4-44.

\textsuperscript{127} V. P. Franklin and James D. Anderson, eds., \textit{New Perspectives on Black Educational History} (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1978), 61.
Table 2. Land-Grant Colleges for African Americans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Accepted Morrill Act Terms</th>
<th>Opened</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>State Agriculture &amp; Mechanical Institute for Negroes</td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>1875</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>The Agricultural, Mechanical &amp; Normal School</td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>1872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>State College for Colored Students</td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>1891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College for Negroes</td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>1887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Georgia State Industrial College</td>
<td>1890</td>
<td>1890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>Kentucky State Industrial College</td>
<td>1893</td>
<td>1887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>Southern University &amp; Agricultural &amp; Mechanical College</td>
<td>1893</td>
<td>1880</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>Princess Anne Academy</td>
<td>1892</td>
<td>1887</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>Alcorn Agricultural and Mechanical College</td>
<td>1890</td>
<td>1871</td>
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<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>Lincoln University</td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>1866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>The Negro Agricultural and Technical College</td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>1894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>Colored Agricultural and Normal University</td>
<td>1899</td>
<td>1897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>The Colored Normal, Agricultural &amp; Mechanical College of South Carolina</td>
<td>1896</td>
<td>1896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>Agricultural and Industrial State Normal School for Negroes</td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>1913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>Prairie View State Normal and Industrial College</td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>1879</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>Virginia State College for Negroes</td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>1883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Virginia</td>
<td>West Virginia State College</td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>1892</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

land-grant colleges,” in the nation. In addition to training Black teachers, its secondary school was the first Black high school in West Virginia to earn full accreditation from the regional accreditation association, and among only four regionally accredited Black secondary schools in the nation in 1927. Southern University and Agricultural and Mechanical College and Virginia State College earned a regional accreditation by 1927.

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State College for Negroes similarly established secondary schools, calling them laboratory schools, which emphasized liberal arts and college preparatory programs. These laboratory schools were not only highly regarded, but selected to be a part of the influential “Secondary School Study for Negroes,” used as models for effective teaching practices.

Writing in 1950, Dr. Ambrose Caliver hailed the tremendous development of the land-grant schools, and their contribution to the “significant progress of public education ... and to the history of Negro life.” In the words of President Davis, these schools were “mindful” of the “urgent opportunity to influence world thought in education.”

Yet, adequate funding was a constant problem. Even with the clear Morrill Act language stating that funds must be “equitably divided,” they were not. Davis’ research revealed continued unfair practices by the states that reflected White racist educational policies and practices.

Attached to the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890 were several other statutes intended to strengthen the scope of the original Morrill Act. The subsequent acts increased the annual subsidy limits and broadened applicable educational programs to include: (1) resident instruction, (2) military training, (3) extension service, and (4) research and experimentation.

Gil Kujovich, in his study of public Black colleges, found that “expenditures for the land grant movement in the


131 J. W. Davis, address at the American Teachers Association Annual Meeting in Perry, History of ATA, 245.

132 To offer brief context, the federal appropriations were matched by state and local funding in four areas. The First Morrill Act required inclusion of military tactics; however the first funds provided to a Black land-grant (West Virginia State College) to support such a program were not provided until 1942. The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 and associated statutes provided for grants for extension services to reach rural citizens. By 1937, none of the $13 million for this land-grant program was distributed to Black land-grants. The Hatch Act of 1887 provided for grants for research and experimentation, which were increased by later amendments. By the mid-1930s only one Black land-grant received $1,800 of the $4 million available. See Gil Kujovich, “Public Colleges: The Long History of Unequal Funding,” Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, no. 2 (Winter 1993-1994): 73-82; Davis, “Negro Land-Grant.”
17 segregationist states show[ed] a discrimination of staggering magnitude.”

Morrill Act funding was based on the proportion of Black and White students relative to the state’s public school population. In 1928, the Black land-grant schools received 23 percent of the $1.5 million, relatively proportionate to the Black population at the time. However, the state distributed only 12 percent of more than $11 million in state appropriations to the 17 land-grant Black institutions. For decades, Black land-grant institutions were excluded from three of the four eligible grant programs, only receiving funds for the “resident instruction” program, which fell far short of the “separate but equal” mandate. While the scope of this study does not include an examination of Morrill Act distribution of funds and the land-grant institutions, this pernicious pattern of inequitable distribution sorely hampered the growth and effectiveness of these schools.

This repeated history of inequitable states’ allocations to the Black and White schools was inextricably linked to issues of control. African Americans were tangled in a persistent web of White supremacist practices that deprived them of state and federal revenues. The Morrill Act of 1890 was a double-edged sword. On one side, it provided much needed funding, but on the other, it legitimized racial separation of the races in schools throughout the South. Still, its direct language mitigated the states’ pattern of neglecting African American education entirely.

Considering the nation’s sordid history of slavery and racial oppression, and especially the history of social relationships in the South prior to and after the Civil War, a number of leading educators argued that the federal government should include specific language in federal education appropriations that would ensure the inclusion of Black Southerners.

In 1929, President Hoover called for a study of the educational activities of the federal government in order to create “a comprehensive, forward-looking, and coherent public policy in

133 Kujovich, “Unequal Funding,” 76.
134 Ibid., 77.
135 Ibid.
regard to education.”136 Primarily concerned with appropriations for public education, a committee was formed and charged with analyzing the nation’s schooling. According to an analysis conducted in 1932 by D. A. Lane, professor and historian at West Virginia State College, it was at the “eleventh hour” that consideration was given to including African Americans on the Committee. The Commissioner of Education and the Secretary of the Interior were alerted to the need to add African Americans to the all-White committee to ensure a healthy investigation of “one of the most perplexing problems” facing the nation, “that of Negro education” in Southern and border states.137 Accordingly, three African American educators were added: Mordecai Johnson, president at Howard University, representing the “outstanding university”; John W. Davis, president of West Virginia State College, representing a land-grant college; and R. R. Moton, the principal of Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, representing excellence in industrial education.138

Nonetheless, when the National Advisory Committee’s Memorandum of Progress was released to the public in 1930, African Americans were greatly alarmed to discover that there was no mention of a plan to protect the allotments for Black education, especially as it applied to the legally segregated public schools in the South. While federal monies had been appropriated to states as early as 1802, the only two statutes that included language to ensure inclusion of African Americans were the second Morrill Act of 1890 and the Nelson Amendment of 1907.139 As this Committee’s purpose was to recommend future federal policy, the absence of safeguards for

137 Ibid., 25; Also see Lane, “The Report of the National Advisory,” 5.
139 The Nelson Amendment of 1907 permitted colleges to use Morrill Act monies to train teachers. It was introduced by Senator Knute Nelson of Minnesota in 1906 to double the yearly grant to each college, from $25,000 to $50,000, allowing federal funds to be used to train teachers in “agricultural and mechanic arts.” While there was considerable debate over the bill, it passed relatively quickly, which some interpreted as a hearty support from Congress for vocational education.
funding Black education greatly distressed African Americans. With federal education appropriations distributed to the state, the historical pattern had been that Southern states would not distribute the funds “equitably.”

When the official “Findings and Recommendations” of the Committee came out two years later, in 1932, the majority report took a strong position against intervening in the states’ funding practices. “Prejudiced teachings designed to sustain and perpetuate class government, favorable to only some of the people,” the report cautioned, could be avoided when states’ rights were not “usurped” by the federal government.  

The report traced the evolution of federal education appropriations over its more than one hundred-year history, revealing how education appropriations had gone from providing “unrestricted” grants to attaching specific directives as to how funds should be used by the states. The majority report underscored the distinctively American relationship between the federal government and states’ rights. It cautioned against the federal government carrying a policy that would “seriously interfere” with local self-government and “impose its educational policy on the state governments.”

Allowing the states complete autonomy was paramount. As the majority saw it, it was not the role of the federal government to dictate how each state chose to manage “special interest groups.” While the Committee recognized the “actual limitations which still operate[d] to handicap Negroes … due to imperfections in the political, economic, physical and social conditions often surrounding them,” the majority report recommended against “prescribing” standards of control and special designations for the education of African Americans, and for “leaving the States free to expend such monies … as the State itself may direct.”

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140 Federal Relations Committee, “Education in the States,” 31. The federal government did not have a legal basis for intervention until the 1954 Supreme Court decision in Brown v. Board of Education that ruled “Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.”

141 Ibid., 32.

142 Out of 51 committee members, the majority represented 45 “Ayes,” “Nays 6.” Ibid., “Recommendations,” 37-38.
that control of federal education funding was placed in the hands of local White Southern officials, and African Americans would have to acquiesce to whatever allotment state and local White elected officials deemed adequate.

The limits of African Americans’ political power and its effect on their education were vigorously addressed in a minority report, which was written to educate the majority and to make clear the “unique and challenging problem” of Black education, particularly in the seventeen Southern states and the District of Columbia.\(^{143}\) A long history of political, economic, and social disenfranchisement of African Americans in these states had produced a profoundly disadvantaged minority group that demanded federal protection. The minority report declared that African American education was “uniquely set apart as by far the most disadvantaged educational group under state jurisdiction.”\(^{144}\) The signers of the minority report, John W. Davis, Mordecai Johnson, and R. R. Moton, included a snapshot of the current state of inequitable funding in an effort to educate the “enfranchised majority.”

While serving the children of more than one-fourth of the entire population of eighteen States, the schools for this racial minority received in 1930 an average appropriation of only 10.7% of the public funds; … less than one-half of the 3,326,482 Negro children of school age were in attendance at school of any kind in 1930; … 75.2% of those enrolled in the public schools during 1925-26 were in classes below the fifth grade; … and while the average expenditure per educable child in the United States, as a whole, exceeds $80, the average annual expenditure per educable Negro child in these States is still less than $15.\(^{145}\)

With this as a historical foundation and pattern, the three African American members of the committee argued in their minority report that it was a “moral, historical, and practical obligation to act, for all the states, to remove these educational disadvantages.”\(^{146}\)

\(^{143}\) Ibid., “Minority Reports,” 106.

\(^{144}\) Ibid., 107.

\(^{145}\) Ibid.

\(^{146}\) Ibid., 108.
Spreading the Message of Disadvantage – Public Relations Problems

In this period and throughout the first half of the twentieth century, African American education was described as a “burden” of the South. No doubt the financial responsibility was a heavy one and certainly difficult to manage. In centuries past, African Americans had been instrumental in developing the South’s wealth, but in the twentieth century frame of mind, they represented its greatest economic challenge. Southern racial customs had guaranteed the social marginalization of African Americans, including ensuring limited educational opportunities (perhaps especially so). As Louis Harlan averred in his study, Separate and Unequal, “Inferior education for Negroes was one of the few things upon which most whites agreed.” Accordingly, Harlan argued, “The system of segregation, far from being a burden, was a convenient means of economizing at the expense of Negro children.”

This sentiment was reflected in numerous articles of the period authored by African American educators. The editor of The Journal of Negro Education, Charles Thompson, openly stated in his editorial “that the inferior educational status of the Negro is not only a consequence of the inferior educational opportunities per se which are provided for Negroes, but equally a result of the debilitating effect of the Negro’s caste position in the American social order.”

Moreover, within this segregated educational system, African Americans had little or no voice in its operation. As Thompson made clear, “Negroes in the South, either because of ‘custom’ or for other well-known reasons, [did] not vote.” Segregated public schools were controlled by local and state boards of education with members elected by White citizens whose primary interest was in providing as much support to the White schools as they could, leaving

147 Harlan, Separate and Unequal, 15.
149 Ibid., 500.
very little for African American education.\textsuperscript{150} With energy, interest, and the majority of public funding directed to White schooling, the White-dominated boards of education displayed a consistent disinterest in the activities of the Black schools. This disregard paradoxically allowed laboratory schools, which were located on the campuses of higher education institutions, to enjoy relative freedom. Gallagher observed wryly that “the Negro is told that if he will hoe only in his own backyard (original emphasis), he can plant almost any crop he wants—provided he will consume it himself, and provided he will not ask permission to plant anywhere else.”\textsuperscript{151}

Pleas from state normal school presidents for increased funding to meet the crushing demands of preparing qualified Black teachers were consistently ignored. Consequently, White officials were ignorant about the caliber of academic programs that existed in the laboratory schools, meager as their school budgets and facilities were. Moreover, White local and national leaders were oblivious to the sense of privilege African Americans enjoyed from having attended or taught at laboratory schools.\textsuperscript{152} The paradoxical result was that presidents of HBCUs with laboratory schools enjoyed the control and power to direct secondary education as they deemed appropriate—implementing a college preparatory liberal arts curriculum that employed progressive educational theories, while also instilling a message of African American competence and potential. As part of this, laboratory school teachers, responsible for educating the children in their high school classrooms and for training teachers who came through their

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\textsuperscript{151} Buell G. Gallagher, \textit{American Caste and the Negro College} (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), 139.

\textsuperscript{152} Gunnar Myrdal addresses this ignorance born out of disinterest and supremacist perspectives in his study, “In the protective Negro community much goes on which the white man does not know about.” \textit{An American Dilemma}, 769. Oral histories collected from graduates of segregated laboratory schools also speak to this point.
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“laboratories” as student teachers, “had much control in how these people thought about” their futures and “how they would practice [teaching] in the future.”\textsuperscript{153}

Another study, entitled \textit{The Control of State-Supported Teacher-Training Programs for Negroes}, conducted in 1934 by Felton Clark, who received his Ph.D. from Teachers College, Columbia University, similarly observed that laboratory schools in teacher training institutions were excluded from most research studies due to “ignorance [of] or indifference to” these programs’ achievements. Consequently, the growing impact of these schools, and the progressive teaching methods practiced in them, were not recognized, or simply ignored by White educational leaders of the period.

Despite the lack of funding from their respective states, enrollments in these teacher training institutions grew substantially. In a thirty-year span, enrollments almost quadrupled. In 1900, these normal schools reported 5,826 students; in 1920, enrollment was at 14,237; and by 1930, enrollment reached 22,704.\textsuperscript{154} “More significant than the increase in enrollment,” Clark found, was “the increase in the quality of enrollment.”\textsuperscript{155} For example, the secondary schools, or laboratory schools, on the campuses of Atlanta University, West Virginia University, and Alabama State Teachers College had demonstrated the “high standards” of teaching, equal to that of the “good” high schools in their respective Southern states—very different from the less than adequate conditions in Black secondary education in general.\textsuperscript{156} The reality was that these


\textsuperscript{154} Clark, \textit{Control of State-Supported Teacher-Training}, 24.

\textsuperscript{155} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{156} These three institutions had earned regional accreditation in their respective regions. The point of defining “good” schools is discussed further in Chapters three and five. For another analysis of “good” schooling, see Aaron Brown, “An Evaluation of the Accredited Secondary Schools for Negroes in the South,” \textit{Journal of Negro Education} 13, no. 4 (Autumn 1944): 488-498, 488-489, 493, 496; Holland Holton, “Establishing and Improving Standards for Secondary Education in the South,” in Ryan et al., eds., \textit{Secondary Education in the South}, 40-54; W. A. Robinson, “A Co-Operative Effort among Southern Negro High Schools,” \textit{The School Review} 52, no. 9 (1944): 532-42; and
institutions created a place for themselves as leaders in education and had a direct effect on secondary education.\textsuperscript{157}

W. A. Robinson, principal of Atlanta University Laboratory High School, Director of the Secondary School Study of the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for Negroes, and President of the National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools (1926-28) asserted that “it was quite understandable that the Negro high school was so frequently not taken into account at the outset.”\textsuperscript{158} Several of the teacher training institutions had developed laboratory schools that kept up with the latest trends in teaching and curriculum.\textsuperscript{159} However, since 1905, “the so-called ‘Tuskegee Idea,’” Robinson stated, was perceived as the “definite philosophy with regard to the education of Negroes,” largely based on the “rather strong belief in the inferior intellectual equipment of the Negro masses.”\textsuperscript{160}

Robinson observed that “the South fairly generally assumed that the Negro high school, whatever it was, bore little resemblance to similar institutions for white children.”\textsuperscript{161} Similarly, in 1928, William Brewer claimed that the Jesse Jones \textit{Negro Education Study} had been based on preconceived assumptions and set out to “substantiate those assumptions,” resulting in many inaccuracies. Writing in 1934, Felton Clark observed that “most of the beliefs about the Negro [had] been predicated upon information acquired by contact with … Negroes in domestic

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\textsuperscript{157} Clark, \textit{Control of State-Supported}, 113.
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\textsuperscript{158} Robinson, “Some Problems,” 465.
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\textsuperscript{160} Ibid.
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\textsuperscript{161} Ibid.
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occupations living in close proximity to their white employers,” ignoring views of educated African Americans. Typical of the era, African Americans “were isolated from the mainstream of American research and scholarship, [and] their data were ignored” in national educational journals.

However, this seemingly universal understanding of the poor state of Black secondary education in the South was not solely due to Whites’ assumptions or ignorance. The *Journal of Negro History*, started by Carter Woodson in 1915, *The Journal of Negro Education*, founded at Howard University in 1932 by Editor Charles H. Thompson, and *Phylon*, founded by W. E. B. Du Bois at Atlanta University in 1940, were three journals that provided avenues for scholarly discourse. *The Journal of Negro Education*, in particular, filled a critical need to provide a forum for issues facing African American education. Charles Thompson was a formidable figure in raising awareness of the social and political problems. A call to professionals in education to raise their voices about the myriad injustices and inequities was sounded. Scholars such as Reid Jackson, David Lane, John W. Davis, and others presented their research findings in pithy articles filled with data highlighting the educational inequities. The benefits derived from this scholarly journal have been inestimable. Nevertheless, this valuable journal contributed to the pervasive message of the gross inequities in educational resources but remained silent about the progress and influential role of college and university laboratory schools.

162 Clark, *Control of State-Supported*, 4.


From the 1920s to the 1940s, while White educational initiatives were examined, explored, and celebrated in the most prestigious scholarly journals, the only attention African American schools received was with the discussion of the “Negro problem” in education (or no discussion at all). Yet, talented and well-educated Black scholars were assiduously working to improve Black schools within their restrictive social environment. Constantly under the scrutiny of the White ruling class, especially in the South, every shared pronouncement, published article, or open statement by African American leaders was made with an awareness of potential White censure. Recognizing the multi-faceted educational issues, Black scholars journeyed through a public relations minefield.

African American educational leaders were keenly aware of the dual society in which they lived, requiring deft judgment in any form of public communication. What was the important message to be selected? To whom should it or could it be directed? How might it be phrased or presented? When would the best timing be? Who else might be reading or listening to the message that was designed for a specific audience? How might the message be misinterpreted, and in what ways? What might the response or repercussions be? How might a message be constructed to reach a target audience? For example, in a 1920 speech to the National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools (NATCS), President John Gandy, frustrated that African American educators were prohibited from “directly determining the educational policies of this country,” advocated activism. He encouraged Black teachers not to accept others’ mandates about the type of education for their community, but to find a way to express their views on education. Gandy instructed his constituents, “Whatever influence we shall exert must enter through indirect channels.”165 Puzzling through communication strategies was an ongoing aspect in the development of African American educational thought.

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These kinds of considerations any leader should naturally intuit; however, history has well informed us that they carried an additional burden for African American leaders. The risk of getting one or more of the strategies wrong could cost the individual, the community, or the educational initiative dearly. In an address to NATCS in 1927, President W. A. Robinson stated,

I have had to wonder how certain things should be said so as not to offend the whole school authorities and endanger … the situation as it is. I have been told on more than one occasion to remember that our combined head is in the lion’s mouth and that tradition dictates the course one in such a position should pursue.\(^{166}\)

A public statement from a Black educator that criticized Southern politics or culture could invite reproach from White leaders, ranging from a verbal rebuke to the loss of one’s livelihood, or worse, depending on the era. While public statements celebrating the successes in African American education might produce the positive result of inspiring African American educators to press on, notwithstanding the hardships they faced, such public announcements of African American achievement in education could also invite negative reactions. Despite the fact that African Americans had made extraordinary strides in education in the decades after the end of the Civil War, White supremacists still made the rules. Many White citizens begrudged the fact that public monies were used to pay for the education of Black children, even though African Americans’ taxes were used to fund public education for Whites.\(^{167}\) At the same time, African American efforts to educate themselves were often publicly derided by White citizens, based on racist assumptions drawn from the Southern White traditions. As historian Michael Fultz grimly noted,

African American educators during the 1890-1940 period were aware of the vulnerability of their enterprise; they were cognizant of the deep-seated hatred and

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mistrust with which many white Southerners viewed “educated niggers,” and they were conscious of what that hostility meant for them individually and for their attempts to reform and improve public schooling for African American children.  

A public announcement of achievement in education might signal to the White community that the meager public funds allotted for African American education were more than enough; after all, they were acclaiming their achievements. According to the Southern White ethos of the period, certainly African American achievement should not exceed White achievement.

If catalogs, bulletins, or articles boasted too much about Black advancement, certain Whites might feel threatened and take steps to curtail whatever advances were achieved. With regard to The Journal of Negro Education, Charles Thompson, a fervent advocate for African American self-determination, launched the journal believing that it would serve to “stimulate Negroes to take a greater part in the solutions of the problems that arise in connection with their own education.”

African American educational leaders mounted a public campaign to reveal the deficiencies in Black public schools. This multi-pronged strategy served to explain the obstacles African Americans faced in social uplift through education. It kept African American teachers informed about the need to address inequitable circumstances throughout the South and provided data on issues such as enrollments and teachers’ salaries. And, perhaps most importantly, it educated the entire nation about the gross injustices in Southern public education for African Americans—inadequate facilities, insufficient teacher training, scant school materials, limited enrollments, poor graduation rates, etc. In 1935, Garnet C. Wilkerson, in his presidential address to NATCS, challenged African American teachers to “seek to eliminate … inequalities by the development of a well-defined, intelligent, and sympathetic public opinion toward the education


of Negroes at public expense.”

In particular, he directed the professional educators to “re-interpret Negro schools to the public ... and lay upon her [America’s] heart the facts of our case....”

Echoing the decade-old challenge posed by D. O. W. Holmes to “face the fraud” and deal with the “consternation” caused by publicly reporting the poor state of public schooling for Black Southerners, public addresses and articles in scholarly journals such as The Journal of Negro History, The Journal of Negro Education, and Phylon painted a dismal portrait. In an address entitled “Taking Thought for Tomorrow,” W. A. Robinson stated “that our greatest barrier to more progress has been unwillingness to admit unpleasant truth.” Editor of The Journal of Negro Education, Charles H. Thompson, was among the most vocal of those who joined the challenge to make public the dismal facts.

In 1939, Thompson declared “that education of and for the Negro [was] not only limited in amount but inferior in quality.” Supporting his claim, Thompson reported that “some 90 per cent of the Negro enrollment” was at the elementary level, and African American enrollment in secondary schools was “only 8 per cent.” He also included data on the average school term (on average, school terms for Black children were two months shorter), the limited number of schools available (keeping students from being able to attend school), and lower teacher salaries (on average, less than 50 percent of what White teachers earned for the same work). Thompson contended that “discrimination in the provision of public funds” was pervasive, affecting all


171 Ibid.

172 Ibid.


174 Ibid.

175 Thompson “Education of and for the Negro,” 489-490.
areas of public education. As a result of the “inferior status” of public education, Thompson asserted that African Americans were in an “inferior status in general.”

Between 1915 and into the 1940s, article after article painted a portrait of the desperate state of affairs. “Especially by the 1930s,” historian Michael Fultz contended, “African American leaders—college-based educators and others—said that the task at hand was to publicize the deplorable condition of black schools in the South.” The reams of data about the impoverished African American schools were intended to alert the world to the long history of gross injustices against African American children. However, what it also did was paint a picture of African American schools during the era of segregation as wholly inferior, which was not the complete picture.

The laboratory schools, which served as the exemplar in the period for secondary education, were not included in these profiles. With a few exceptions, Black laboratory high schools associated with colleges and universities were absent from the ongoing discussion. Consequently, many historians of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s based their analyses of African American educational history on the studies that described inferior quality and victimization. Historian Fultz argued that data on the poorest conditions were encouraged, noting, “the desire to publicize and to highlight the poor quality of black schools resulted in a slighting of teachers’ achievements.” Similarly, it also slighted the achievements of the laboratory high schools and the influential role they played.

The absence of positive portraits of education during the era of legal segregation was also noted by James A. Banks, professor of education and director of the Center for Multicultural Education at the University of Washington. “The mainstream academic community and its

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175 Ibid., 493-494.


journal editors had little interest in research and work on communities of color prior to the 1960s,” Banks argued in a recent study, “especially work that presented positive descriptions of minority communities and that was oppositional to mainstream racist scholarship.” Even more troublesome, he noted, was the fact that “student after student has been content to repeat propositions concerning ... the Negro past without critical analysis.” Banks argued for a keener understanding of the social and political context of the period and its effect on the studies of the period. In a similar vein, Melville Herskovits noted in his study, *The Myth of the Negro Past*, that the “study of the Negro’s past is important in developing better race relations, because such study shapes attitudes toward Negroes on the part of white persons and attitudes of Negroes themselves.”

Certainly, there is no doubt that African American education suffered terribly from the White supremacist and unjust policies and practices. However, within that environment, African American educational leaders such as John W. Davis, President of West Virginia State College, W. A. Robinson, Principal of Atlanta University Laboratory School, and H. C. Trenholm, president of Alabama State Teachers College, worked together to raise the quality of secondary education to promote Black advancement. Despite the efforts by White Southerners and Northern philanthropists to spread the gospel of manual arts education, these African American educators sought to prepare students to teach the liberal arts and to prepare their laboratory school students for college. In a turbulent time in our nation’s history, as the number of African American secondary schools increased throughout the South, these leaders used their laboratory schools as

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181 Ibid.

centers of influence. Laboratory high schools were institutions that served as active agents in the promotion of African American secondary education in the South.
LABORATORY HIGH SCHOOLS IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

To the pioneers in education who labored throughout the Southern area under adverse conditions to dispel the darkness of ignorance.
A patient but persistent lot quick in vision in cooperation generous faithful in service. [sic]¹

Chapter III

INTERSECTIONS, OPPORTUNITIES, AND STRATEGIES

FOR ADVANCEMENT, 1920-1940S: BLACK LABORATORY SCHOOLS

DURING THE PROGRESSIVE ERA

In 1920, progressive educators George Washington Trenholm and his son Harper Councill stood on the campus of Alabama’s Normal School in Montgomery with a vision for their institution. They saw “corps of Negro statesmen, scientists, doctors, lawyers, architects, and engineers emerging to break down the barriers of racial misunderstanding and build a new world of justice, tolerance and brotherly love.”² The Trenholms dreamed big, and the Progressive era proved an opportune time to ride the wave of progressive ideas to advance Black education. Taking advantage of the emphasis on democracy in education, the Trenholms strategized ways to create intersections for pathways to progress. During this period, State Normal Laboratory High School, partnering with other Black laboratory schools, proved to be influential channels for advancing secondary education for African Americans.


²Mary Fair Burks, “The Biography of Dr. Harper Councill Trenholm,” in “A Salute to the President, 25th Anniversary.”
The 1920s have been recognized as the decade that gave rise to the Progressive Education Movement. Education leaders at Teachers College, Columbia University, such as John Dewey, George Counts, John Kilpatrick, and Harold Rugg, among others, championed their ideas on curriculum and teaching methodologies that would best serve a democratic society. It was an era of pedagogical experimentation in an effort to meet the needs of a diverse society. The rich tapestry of progressive educational theories included such pedagogical threads as experiential education and social reconstructionist curriculum, which were designed to engage the students in affecting social reform. Prominent in the lofty debates was the central issue of America’s democratic freedoms. Of primary importance to educators such as John Dewey was providing the opportunity to realize those democratic freedoms within the classroom—the teacher and students needed to be free to create the curriculum that best suited their learning needs, as they experienced them—a theory that had tremendous resonance with Black educators in the South.3

It was in this era of impassioned positions about teaching democracy, amidst an atmosphere of southern White opposition to Black education that the “great expansion of high schools for Negro boys and girls” occurred.4 W. A. Robinson, principal of the Atlanta University Laboratory School and Director of the Secondary School Study for Negroes, proudly declared that it “was one of the most encouraging phenomena in our educational history.”5 From an inhospitable environment in which it “had become practically an accepted scientific fact” that


5 Ibid.
African Americans were intellectually inferior and whose education was deemed a burden for the larger society to bear, secondary education for African Americans emerged.⁶

It was in this epoch that Southern African American educators such as George Washington Trenholm, W. A. Robinson, and Harper Councill Trenholm, among others, interconnected with the progressive educational theories espoused by the great education leaders from Teachers College to influence Black education. These Southern Black educators laced the strands of progressive theories through their curriculum and teaching methods to produce their own distinctive tapestry of what could and would become possible for Black secondary education in the South.

For Black educators in the South, there was a constant tension of living in a dual society. As Americans, they were part of the era of national transformation, where progressives looked at the institution of the public school as a critical component to America’s future success as a democratic nation. As African Americans, they functioned in the caste-like Southern social structure, in which being a Black American meant that you were not only last in line to receive what was left of public monies, but your very presence as an educated African American threatened the White supremacist culture.⁷ However, contrary to the worldview of an unchanging caste system, African American educators were not resigned to the subordinate position. Rather, they saw education as a pathway to redefining African Americans’ place in the democratic nation in which they were citizens.⁸

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⁶ Ibid. Also see Charles H. Thompson, “Address at the Meeting of the World Federation of Education Associations, August 10-17, 1935,” School and Society 42, no. 1089 (University of Oxford, November 9, 1935).

⁷ Bond, Negro Education in Alabama, 287.

The concern for America’s high schools was among the hot topics of the era, and, as leaders of teacher training institutions, Black educators grabbed onto the discussion strings about education in a democratic society. Just as there were numerous progressive education “identities” among the renowned White progressives, Black laboratory school educators sculpted their own form of progressive education. For these leaders, a progressive approach to schooling meant awakening the African American teaching force in the South to the ideas of experiential education and social reconstruction. It meant positioning their schools to effect reform. The leaders at the teachers college for African Americans in Alabama believed that the best way to effect change was from a position of strength. Sharing a home in the Cradle of the Confederacy with Alabama’s White policymakers, George Washington Trenholm and later Harper Councill Trenholm cautiously and strategically led the state-supported teachers college, forging alliances and leveraging the laboratory high school to launch a multi-pronged initiative to affect education.\footnote{Gasman and Epstein, “Creating an Image,” 41-61. Also see Ronald Goodenow, “The Progressive Educator, Race and Ethnicity in the Depression Years: an Overview,” \textit{History of Education Quarterly} 15, no. 4 (Winter 1975): 365-394. Goodenow made specific reference to the democratic rhetoric of the National Education Association’s Education Policies Commission on Social Studies. In 1918, the NEA’s Seven Cardinal Principles had as its overarching principle that, “It is the ideal of democracy that the individual and society may find fulfillment each in the other.”} It would be a long and arduous task, one that would require perspicacity, fortitude, and endurance.

Assessments of the state of secondary education in the first decades of the twentieth century revealed that most of the Southern states held the lowest rankings in the nation. The lowly condition of Southern education was measured by attendance, term length, and expenditure.\footnote{Eleven states ranked as follows: Texas, 36th; Florida, 37th; Virginia, 39th; Tennessee, 40th; Louisiana, 42nd; Georgia, 43rd; North Carolina, 44th; Alabama, 45th; Arkansas, 46th; Mississippi, 47th; and South Carolina, 48th. See Knight, \textit{Public Education}, 420.} Expenditure considered per child of school age, per child attending, and per
teacher for salaries. In these early years, states had yet to establish and/or enforce compulsory attendance laws, which directly influenced the number of children attending school throughout the nation, and especially in the South. For example, in 1918, high school enrollment was 9.3 percent of the school population in all grades in the nation, compared to 5.1 percent in the South. In 1900, the average school term was 144 days for the nation compared to only 100 days in the South. By 1938, the school term had lengthened throughout the nation, with an average of about 174 days, whereas the Southern states averaged about 157 days. With regard to teachers’ salaries, the South’s average annual salary scale in 1922 was “less than four fifths of the average of the United States” and “less than fifty per cent” by 1939.

What stressed the educational system further was the depressed Southern economy. Between 1900 and 1915, the South’s increase in schooling expenditures was 100 percent greater than that of the nation. The property values in the South were estimated to be, on average, “one third that of the Northern states and one fourth” of the Western states.

The fact that the South had “greater numbers of children to educate than the other sections of the country” intensified the strain. Of the eleven Southern states ranked at the bottom nationally, educator Edgar Knight tabulated that there was an average of “1279 children of school age” per one thousand adult males. This compared to “the corresponding average in the North

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11 Ibid., 423.
12 Edgar W. Knight, Education in the South (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1924), 25.
15 Knight, Public Education, 442.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid., 441.
[of] 789, and in the West [of] about 600 children” per one thousand adult males. Toward mid-century, a study conducted by J. D. Messick, president of East Carolina University, found that the South’s “handicaps” were unrelenting; it had “only 15 per cent of the nation’s wealth but about 35 per cent of the nation’s children.”

Aaron Brown, in his Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Chicago, examined the studies produced by the American Youth Commission, the National Resources Planning Boards, and the Advisory Committee on Education, and similarly found that the South had a “larger educational task than other sections of the nation.” If each individual state attempted to support an educational program that equaled that of the nation’s average, the South’s “poorest state would have to spend for schools alone 190 percent as much revenue as it could raise.”

Further exacerbating the situation was the South’s insistence on providing two separate systems of education, one for its White citizens and one for its Black citizens. The deadly combination of the South’s earlier history of “no business of the state’ attitude toward education,” its extended strained economic condition, and the ubiquitous White supremacist frame of mind resulted in the predictable underdevelopment of secondary education for African Americans.


19 These were respected as the “most outstanding studies” of the period on the issue. Aaron Brown, “An Evaluation of the Accredited Secondary Schools for Negores in the South,” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1944), 45. Also see Edgar L. Morphet, “Influence of the Southern States Work-Conference,” in Ryan et al., eds., Secondary Education in the South, 218.


21 United States Bureau of Education, United States Office of Education, An Education Study of Alabama (Washington, D.C., 1919), 269. In regards to the “no business of the state’ attitude toward education,” since the 17th century, the South resisted establishing public schools, and iterations of that position continued into the 19th century. When progressive educational movements regarding public schooling flowed through the North into the early 19th century, the South dammed such innovations for both races until the post-Civil War era. Moreover, some Southern states, such as Alabama, prohibited any kind of education for African Americans at all, with harsh penalties for doing so. See Knox, “Historical Sketch,” 442. Also see Edgar Knight, Public Education, 423. Knight asserted
With the financial and social burden of two separate systems of public and private schooling and the collective disdain most Southerners had for educated Black citizens, African Americans’ achievements in developing their own high schools were either dismissed or disparaged. In a speech to the Hampton Negro Conference in 1907, Field Agent of the Southern Education Board, W. T. B. Williams, traced the history of Black public high schools.22 Noting the influential Report of the Committee of Ten and its emphasis on the importance of a classical high school education, Williams stated, “There seems to be among school officials almost a general tendency, contemporaneous with a general reactionary attitude towards the Negro, to discredit the work of colored high schools.”23 This remained the case for decades. On the rare occasions that Black secondary education was addressed in scholarly studies, the persistent theme was African Americans’ pervasive ineptitude in their attempts to teach a misdirected classical curriculum in appalling facilities.24 The result was a collective neglect of secondary education for African American citizens by Southern White leadership.

By the late 1920s, the demand for college-educated African American teachers increased; yet, there remained a general disregard for the adequate development of and funding for secondary education.25 Moreover, the Southern White policymakers of the period continued to

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22 William Taylor Burwell Williams was a graduate of the Hampton Institute, attended the Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, and graduated from Harvard University in 1897. He served as a field agent for the Slater Fund and General Education Board and later became Dean of Tuskegee Institute. He continued to author studies and make public addresses throughout his career. He served as president of NATCS, and was awarded the NAACP’s Spingarn Medal in 1934.

23 Sponsored by the National Education Association, the Committee of Ten was born out of an expressed desire to establish a standard curriculum for high schools. This is further discussed later in this chapter. W. T. B. Williams, “Colored Public Schools” (paper presented at the Hampton Negro Conference), Hampton Bulletin, Eleventh Annual Report 3, no. 3 (Hampton, Va.: The Institute Press, 1908), 39-53.

24 Jones, Negro Education, 2 vols.; Knight, Public Education in the South.

emphasize the importance and practicality of an industrial arts curriculum. In 1932, a study by Ambrose Caliver, which was considered “the most significant” study of Black secondary schools conducted to date, reported that the “differences in secondary-school facilities between the white and colored races [we]re in ... practically every instance of major importance in favor of the whites.” As a result of “the general inadequacy of secondary-school offerings,” African Americans faced “an enormous disadvantage” in the “competition of American life.”

Unquestionably, the law of “separate but equal” was not being fulfilled. Scholar Horace Mann Bond fumed that without the freedom to enjoy and hold an equal place in society economically, politically, and socially, the harsh reality was that the promise of “separate but equal” for African American education was “an utter sham.” Historian V. P. Franklin later argued that the unequal or industrial arts education allotted to African Americans was not what African Americans desired, but designed to ensure a subordinate status in a White supremacist society. James Anderson concluded in his classic, Education of Blacks in the South, that “African Americans were generally excluded from the American and southern transformation of public secondary education.”

26 See W. T. B. Williams, Report on Negro Universities and Colleges (The Trustees of the John F. Slater Fund Occasional Papers, no. 21, 1922); An Education Study of Alabama, 269; Knox, “Historical Sketch,” 442. Also see Anderson, Education of Blacks, 203-206, 228, 249.

27 Redcay, County Training Schools, 23; Caliver, Secondary Education, 119.

28 Caliver, Secondary Education.


31 Anderson, Education of Blacks, 188.
Clearly, in a large part this was true. The enlightening work of these and numerous other historians has effectively revealed a story of oppression and injustice in providing equal educational opportunities for African Americans in the South. Moreover, as Anderson and others have effectively argued, high school education for African Americans in the early twentieth century utilized a curriculum that was designed to subordinate, not advance, the Southern Black citizen.

However, also at this time, there existed secondary education that did not employ a curriculum to subordinate, but readied its students for successful college and professional careers for living in a dual society. Laboratory schools associated with teacher training institutions were doing their part to influence African American high school education.

Teacher training institutions such as State Teachers College in Montgomery, Alabama, often provided the only secondary education in the area. Alabama’s state normal school was described by W. T. B. Williams in the early twentieth century as having “the reputation of” producing graduates who “pass[ed] very successfully and in large numbers the state teachers’ examinations.”32 By mid-century, it had grown to become the largest teacher training program for African Americans in Alabama.33 Moreover, the school served as “a sort of social centre for the colored people,” and by the 1930s, its influence in education was felt throughout the state—its extension program preparing teachers in more than twenty-five counties and its laboratory school producing future leaders.34 Particularly during the period of “phenomenal growth of public Black


34 Williams, “State Normal School”; “Announcement of Curricula with Description of Courses and Certification Regulations for 1930-31,” 64-65; Catalogue of the Faculty and Students for 1929-30 and General Announcement for 1930-31, 23.
high schools in the South,” 1920 to the 1940s, a number of laboratory high schools demonstrated fruitful connections to progressive curricular ideas of the period.35

These “laboratory high schools,” located on the campuses of Black colleges and universities, evolved from the model or practice schools, which were originally part of the core curriculum for the institution. In the absence of public or private secondary schools that offered a college preparatory program, schools such as Montgomery, Alabama’s State Normal School had few students enrolled in its college division. State Normal School primarily emphasized a college preparatory course of study for its students to develop students who could eventually enroll and succeed in its college division. As these schools cultivated the level and quality of both their students and their course offerings to reach actual university- or college-level degree-granting programs, these high schools remained as a necessary part of the institution.36

Progressive leaders of teacher training institutions, inspired by the progressive education ideas generated by leading scholars, such as John Dewey, developed their college or university high schools into laboratory high schools. The laboratory high schools were designed not only to train future teachers through demonstration and observation, but also to employ the latest curriculum and teaching trends, encourage experimentation with pedagogy, and offer opportunities for practical research. As such, the teachers of the laboratory schools were among the finest, as measured by experience and education, and, consequently, the pupils of the laboratory high schools had the privilege of receiving an excellent education.

Not only did these laboratory schools in such Southern cities as Atlanta, Georgia; Ettick, Virginia; and Montgomery, Alabama, provide a top-notch education to their Black communities, but the role they played in Black education, 1920 through the 1950s, directly and indirectly


36 Schools such as State Normal School, Montgomery, developed its students from the elementary level on up. Accordingly, the level of course work matched the grade of the students. Over the years, more students joined the ranks of the high school and college divisions, consequently, more college level course work also developed.
influenced tens of thousands of African American teachers, and Black secondary education in general.37 Within the context of the progressive era, laboratory high schools were active instruments in education, and Alabama State College Laboratory School in particular.

Meeting the Needs of the South: Dual Perspectives of the “Most Suitable” Black High School Curriculum

Although largely ignored in the histories of African American secondary education, presidents George Washington Trenholm and Harper Councill Trenholm of State Teachers College were progressive leaders and provided a comprehensive secondary school education at their institution. Inspired by their education at the University of Chicago’s graduate school of education, and by intellectuals such as W. E. B. Du Bois and Carter G. Woodson, first G. W. Trenholm, and then his son H. C. Trenholm, resisted “channeling” African Americans into industrial arts education and, instead, positioned the high school as a laboratory of learning in the classical liberal tradition.38 In an environment that derided secondary education and ignored examples of achievement in Black laboratory high schools in scholarly journals, H. C. Trenholm encouraged scrutiny of Black secondary education in an effort to raise awareness of and support for Black high schools—what needed improvement and what was working well. Throughout the “Southern transformation of public secondary school education,” Alabama State College Laboratory School was among the high schools that was positioned to inspire academic achievement, create alliances, mold collaborations, and advance Black secondary education through achieving accreditation.

37 Atlanta University Laboratory High School, Atlanta, Georgia; D. Webster Davis Laboratory School of Virginia State College for Negroes, Ettrick, Va.; and State Teachers College Laboratory High School, Montgomery, Ala.

38 Historian James D. Anderson discussed the desire of the philanthropic organizations to “shape the course of black public secondary education” by controlling it and directing it into the “right channels”—industrial education. See Anderson, Education of Blacks, 206.
The progressive efforts of G. W. Trenholm occurred at a time when the central interest to the wealthy White supporters of Black education was, as Jesse Jones had noted, the “promotion of the cause of the best and most practical education of all colored people for better living, civic righteousness, and industrial and economic efficiency.”

This meant prominence of manual arts training as modeled by Samuel Chapman Armstrong’s Hampton Institute. The question of what kind of education best suited African Americans was fiercely debated and received tremendous coverage in published journals.

In 1919, Leo M. Favrot, Field Agent for the General Education Board, addressed the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, “trying” to explain the current circumstances of Black education from the perspective of a White professional. Expressing his

40 Samuel C. Armstrong, a General in the Union army during the Civil War, is best known for his founding of Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute and for establishing a model of a manual and industrial arts education for African Americans. A controversial figure, among his White supremacists views was his belief that African Americans should not have the right to vote. Armstrong’s protégé was Booker T. Washington, who founded Tuskegee Institute following Hampton’s model.

41 Most famously argued by Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois, the issue of industrial versus a liberal arts education attracted a variety of outspoken supporters from each camp, hotly debated long after the industrial curricula reign of power of Booker T. Washington and his “Tuskegee Machine.” See Du Bois, “Self Assertion and the Higher Education,” in Correa, “For Their Own Good,” 233. Also see Dr. Alexander of the Virginia State Department of Education and his address to the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools in 1947, Fred M. Alexander, “Problems Facing Secondary Education in the South,” The Southern Association Quarterly 11 (Fall 1947): 271-279; Thompson, “Education of and for the Negro,” 507. For a thorough discussion of emphasis on vocational education from the lens of the African American teachers’ association, see Perry, History of ATA, 223-235. “This was particularly strong during the years from 1928 until the change of name from NATCS to ATA in 1936 and thereafter.” Perry put the emphasis on “business” courses, such as bookkeeping and accounting and cited as the principal reason allocation of funds was limited to Black colleges and high schools was because jobs were not available to African Americans in the South.

42 The Tenth Annual Conference of the Association, Cleveland, Ohio, June 22 to June 29, “was the largest and most constructive conference yet held by the National Association. There were 265 delegates present from 34 states. Every Southern state was represented.” The strong attendance “taxed the capacity of the large auditoriums.” General sessions included Education and Publicity, among others. See Annual Report of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (New York: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, National Office, 1919), 79.
“sympathy, admiration, and respect” for African Americans’ efforts, Favrot cited the World War in “helping to broaden [the] vision” of the “doubtful” [White] South, and its commitment to supporting a “strong system of schools for colored people.” Favrot underscored the General Education Board’s efforts to serve African Americans in the most popularly supported education—industrial. He praised the Hampton and Tuskegee model, “which place[d] emphasis upon industry and thrift, health and sanitation, character and service.”

There might have been some in the audience who were completely delighted with Favrot’s support and affirmation of industrial arts education. Surely, though, some in attendance, such as Atlanta University’s faculty, boasting degrees from “Yale, Harvard, Dartmouth and Wellesley,” might have winced at Favrot’s phraseology. During this period, White interest and support for Black education remained fastened to industrial arts curricula, even though surveys demonstrated that the majority of African Americans preferred a classical education.

43 L. M Favrot, *Crisis* 18, no. 4 (1919), 182; Leo M. Favrot, “Some Problems in the Education of the Negro in the South and How We Are Trying to Meet Them in Louisiana” (address of Leo M. Favrot, State Agent of Rural Schools for Negroes in Louisiana Before the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Cleveland, Ohio, June 25, 1919), 8.

44 Ibid.

45 For a listing of educators from Atlanta University who attended this conference, see *Crisis* 18, no. 4 (August 1919), 177. Regarding the positive response to Favrot’s sincere effort to support Black education, Sarah C. Thuesen posits that GEB officials “found considerable kinship with white southerners who approached race relations with a paternalistic liberalism … who genuinely believed in black opportunity but” did not advocate black autonomy.” See Thuesen, “The General Education Board and the Racial Leadership of Black Education in the South, 1920-1960,” in Rockefeller Archive Center Research Reports, Ken Rose and Erwin Levold, eds. (The Rockefeller University Center Archive Center, 2001) 2.

46 Even in the 1930s, the “Tuskegee Idea” continued to be argued by Tuskegee representatives and White leaders as the best education for Negroes. See Alphonse Heningburg, Director, Academic Department (High School), Tuskegee, Institute, “Negroes must give more attention to the needs of those occupational areas in which most Negroes find employment. The fields which rank highest in this respect are those of agriculture and domestic service.” See Alphonse Heningburg, “What Shall We Challenge in the Existing Order?” in “The Reorganization and Redirection of Negro Education,” *Journal of Negro Education* 5, no. 3 (Jul., 1936): 383-392, 386; Alphonse Heningburg, “The Relation of Tuskegee Institute to Education in the Lower South,” in “Negro Education,” *Journal of Educational Sociology* 7, no. 3 (Nov., 1933): 157-162. On the issue of African Americans preferring a classical
Managing the tension between teaching a manual arts curriculum and a classical curriculum demanded sagacity. There was merit in both kinds of education for Southern Blacks. However, what was also attached to the curriculum choice was the ethos of Black subordination. For many, a manual arts education was designed to educate African Americans to assume subordinate positions in society, while a classical liberal arts education reflected the traditional curriculum for the educated citizen and a path toward “thinking men’s” college education.  

There was room for both kinds of education in Southern Black schooling.

G. W. Trenholm strived to manage this tension. Trenholm recognized the special needs of rural teachers and the interests of the county and state boards of education in manual arts education, while he remained committed to a “scholastic liberal education” for his Normal School. He created a one-week summer conference designed to launch an extension program intended to professionalize the rural teaching force. Program elements included employing progressive teaching methodologies, such as tying learning to life’s interests, engaging in the community’s needs, and returning to the notion of incorporating the family as part of the teaching team. At the same time, he commended the benefits of manual training.

Having gained state support for his extension program, Trenholm brought in the State Superintendent of Education to “discuss educational conditions” and offer “constructive suggestions.” One can imagine that the discussion of educational conditions and the liberal arts curriculum over industrial, see Anderson, *Education of Blacks*, 29-30, 58, 66-69, 114, 129-135, 199, 210, 244.

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48 *Catalogue of Faculty and Students, 1920-1921.*

49 G. W. Trenholm, penciled notes, “Improving the Rural Teaching Force Thru Teachers’ Institutes” (1914) 2.
superintendent’s suggestions for Black education packed a punch. It was at a time when the state of Alabama provided only 26.17 percent of Alabama’s total school revenue and the total appropriation for institutions of higher learning for Black schools was about $24,000, compared to “slightly more than a quarter of a million dollars” for White schools.\(^{50}\) It was also in the period when Southern policymakers were unanimous in their opinion that “manual arts” or “industrial education” was what was best suited for African Americans.\(^{51}\)

In his printed account of the program, Trenholm remarked on the teachers’ initial “misgiving as to the wisdom of placing emphasis on manual training.”\(^{52}\) Appearing to attempt to assuage the concern that some readers of his report might have had over the teachers balking at the emphasis on manual training, Trenholm complimented the teachers and celebrated their “hearty” participation, nonetheless.\(^{53}\) Also in his account, Trenholm stressed the teachers’ “enthusiastic reception” to the extension program, which allowed for continued education toward certification—as well he should have, since it was a major advancement in Black teacher education.\(^{54}\) It gave teachers a way to gain both education and teacher certification credits at the same time, both authorized by the state.

\(^{50}\) In 1918, state appropriations were “$16,000 to State Normal School at Montgomery, and $4,000 each to A. & M. College and to Tuskegee Institute.” The balance was provided by northern philanthropic organizations, such as the GEB, contributions by the African American community, and creative fundraising by the schools’ leaders such as H. C. Trenholm. An Education Study of Alabama; H. C. Trenholm. “Some Background and Status of Higher Education for Negroes in Alabama,” in The 1949 ASTA Yearbook (Montgomery: Alabama State Teachers Association through State Teachers College, Montgomery, March, 1949), 35, 46, hereafter cited as H. C. Trenholm, “Some Background.”


\(^{52}\) Ibid.

\(^{53}\) Ibid.

\(^{54}\) Ibid.
Trenholm’s reference in his report to the “emphasis on manual training” and the teachers’ response of unease were not mentioned in any other of his reports, penned notes, or correspondences that have survived. One might speculate on the sensitivity of the environment as he endeavored to address the state’s emphasis on manual training while also trying to professionalize Alabama’s African American teaching force through a progressive program. In fact, his speeches, personal notes, plans, reports, and correspondences emphasized “turning on the light,” “studying,” and the need for a “college education,” although on the latter he remarked, “I am not unmindful of the fact that it is a little unpopular to speak out for the higher education of the Negro.”\textsuperscript{55} Trenholm recruited and encouraged the “best and brightest” to continue on to college.\textsuperscript{56}

Over the years, Trenholm continued the teacher institutes as part of the extension program and received dozens of letters “singing [his] praises” for the “most profitable” and “enjoyable” training.\textsuperscript{57} The attendees felt “awakened as a result of the Institute’s work” and eager to implement what they had learned in their schools.\textsuperscript{58} There was no doubt that Trenholm’s extension program was tremendously influential in reaching and improving teacher education and, consequently, secondary education for African Americans.\textsuperscript{59} Managing the diverse interests in curriculum direction was a delicate balance, one that required strategy and stamina.

\textsuperscript{55} G. W. Trenholm, “Status of Negro Education in Alabama” (address, Alabama State Teachers Association, Selma, Alabama, April 4, 1912), 6, 8, 11; G. W. Trenholm to high school graduates 31 August 1923.

\textsuperscript{56} G. W. Trenholm, “Status of Negro Education.”

\textsuperscript{57} E. J. Andrews to G. W. Trenholm, 2 March 1917.

\textsuperscript{58} R. H. Lees to G. W. Trenholm, 1 June 1916; P. J. Carmichael to G. W. Trenholm, 26, April 1916.

\textsuperscript{59} The General Education Board noted the work of the “well-known institutions at Normal, Montgomery, Alabama” and its work “of improving the quality of the teaching.... In 1913, thirty-seven such institutes were conducted in Alabama, with an attendance of 1800 teachers who received instruction in academic, industrial, and domestic branches. Of the total expense of $2,600, the state contributed $1,500, the teachers themselves $1,000 and the Slater Board, $100.” See The General Education Board: An Account of Its Activities, 1902-1914 (New York: The General Education Board, 1915), 193, 200.
African American teachers’ opposition to manual training had a long life. Writing in 1947, President of East Carolina University J. D. Messick stated that, despite the fact that “almost all of them [African Americans] want a classical high-school education, that is not what is needed” most. Based on Messick’s findings that “not more than 10 per cent of the Negro high-school graduates” went to college (the same percentage that applied “to the tenant class of white people,” he pointed out), Messick judged that their interests in a classical high school curriculum were “misplaced.” What would serve the African American community best, Messick determined, was the “motivating impulse” of the Hampton and Tuskegee vocational model of education.

What was actually motivating to African Americans was the desire to attract funding through the “interest of white donors [who supported] industrial education.” Consequently, institutions adopted manual arts or industrial arts terminology in the names of their institutions or espoused industrial arts descriptions for their courses. Certainly, some institutions wholeheartedly embraced the manual arts curriculum, proudly modeling their programs after the Hampton model. Among the most renowned was Booker T. Washington’s Tuskegee Institute, an exemplar in attracting Northern philanthropic support. Daniel Joseph Pfanner found in his study, The Thought of Negro Educators in Negro Higher Education, 1900-1950, that in an environment

60 Messick, “Negro Education,” 94.

61 Ibid.; W.E.B. Du Bois publicly attacked the merits of an industrial education, citing the “determination of certain folk to use the American public-school system for the production of laborers” and attempt to “fasten ignorance and menial service on the Negro for another generation” under the guise of vocational training. The very point that Messick made in 1947 is what Du Bois argued—that an industrial or vocational focus in education does not adequately prepare students to enter college. In 1917 Du Bois scathingly attacked the benefits of a Hampton education when he stated in Crisis that graduates from Hampton could not meet the demands of a higher education curriculum and were mired “in an educational blind alley, with further progress barred.” See W.E.B. Du Bois, “Education,” Crisis 10, no. 3 (July 1915), 132; “The Immediate Program of the American Negro,” Crisis 9, no. 6 (April 1915): 312; and “Hampton,” Crisis 15, no. 1 (Nov. 1917): 10-12.


where funding for African American education was a battle for each penny of support, “padding of catalogues was a widespread practice.” This not only related to listing courses that would exemplify the manual arts focus, but also was intended to demonstrate breadth and quality. “For example,” Pfanner noted, “Tuskegee listed more than two hundred courses, but gave instruction in fewer than sixty.” Further, “like many institutions” in the period vying for Morrill Act 1890 monies, “Tuskegee classified high school subjects as college courses.”

Pressure to adjust course curriculum to manual arts was felt by most Black high schools. It was common for White local school authorities to refuse to allow Black secondary schools to offer any foreign language courses, and a “rather general disinclination to include such ‘cultural’ courses as music and art.” Primarily, though, the greatest outside pressure was for Black high schools to abandon what was considered the impractical classical arts curriculum that offered the hollow promise of an even more unrealistic college education in liberal arts.

The early history of Talladega College’s Practice High School in Alabama reflected the tensions that Black secondary schools and colleges faced in the early decades of the twentieth century. A privately funded school, Talladega had demonstrated “the flexibility and power of accommodation” during this time of intense pressure to implement industrial arts curricula.

According to historians Henry N. Drewry and Humphrey Doermann, in their study Stand and Prosper: Private Black Colleges and Their Students, Talladega’s Practice High School had incorporated a classical academic curriculum and had long been recognized among the African

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65 Ibid.

66 White local school boards also influenced manual arts curriculum options in Black schools when they deemed the interests of Whites were threatened. Certain trades were excluded “which the white workers of the community either dominated or wished to dominate.” See Robinson, “Some Problems,” 479-480.

67 Ibid, 135.
American community for its “impressive development” and strong “academic standing.” Its academic course program included English, biology, history, mathematics, German, and Latin. Its catalogue declared that the mission “of the college [was] to secure for its students the highest possible development in body, and mind and spirit.” In the first years of the twentieth century, the ratio of Talladega’s “elementary and secondary school students to college students was 180 to one.” Setting as “its goal the development of a College,” by 1922, it had a total enrollment of 511, 123 of whom were enrolled in college, and reported 26 college graduates. Reflecting on the school’s commitment to a classical liberal arts tradition, Talladega graduate, attorney George M. Crawford, emphasized that no “amount of pressure [could] dislodge it from the basic thesis that making a living [was] subordinate to making a life.”

An example of a public high school that was pressed to adopt a manual arts program was Pearl High School, considered the “jewel” of Tennessee for its “educational excellence.”

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69 Ibid.

70 Ibid., 128.

71 Ibid. The authors noted the “good fortune” of a “farseeing Board of Trustees, and the deep interest of the American Missionary Association” in support of developing a liberal arts college. Drewry and Doermann also claimed that the combination of secondary school and “college” ... immediately became a center of community activity.” See the enrollment and college graduation statistics, 141. In comparison, the state-funded Normal School had not yet received permission to develop a four-year college division. For the same year, 1922, State Normal reported a total of 30 students in the Junior College Division and 634 in the other “schools,” which included the Senior High School (Lab School), the Junior High School, Special Preparatory School, Training School, Commercial Department and Music Department. The school reported five graduates from junior college and twenty-five from senior high school. See as “Catalogue of Faculty and Students, 1921-1922”; State Normal Spring Quarter, 1922 Commencement Exercises.” By 1937, State Teachers College reported a college enrollment of 704, with Talladega at 264. See “Teachers College Third Academic Meet, Montgomery, Alabama, 1936.”

72 George W. Crawford (address at Talladega College on the occasion of being awarded a Doctor of Law, 1950) in Drewry and Doermann, *Stand and Prosper*, 135.

would later be among the few Black high schools in the South that was studied as an example of African Americans’ academic excellence in the classical liberal arts tradition. As early as 1915, Pearl High School in Nashville, Tennessee, had established a four-year secondary-level college-preparatory course of studies for its students. Yet, it eventually buckled under the unrelenting (White) expectation to adopt a manual arts curriculum because of a need for outside funding.

Pearl High School historian, Sonya Ramsey, stated that after years of being pressed to embrace the manual arts, Pearl finally added an industrial arts track in order to accept needed funding from the General Education Board. Ramsey argued that the industrial-focused curriculum was secondary to the liberal arts education. “Pearl prepared students to attend college,” Ramsey declared, “not work as laborers.”

Found throughout the South were other gems like Pearl High School, such as:
1. Paul Laurence Dunbar High School, Arkansas
2. Lincoln High School, Tallahassee, Florida
3. Lincoln-Grant School, Covington, Kentucky
4. Dudley High School, Greensboro, North Carolina
5. Booker Washington High School, Columbia, South Carolina
7. I. M. Terrell High School, Fort Worth, Texas
8. Huntington High School, Newport News, Virginia

Certainly, this is not a perfectly complete list of Black schools that were considered to provide an “excellent” college preparatory education in the liberal arts. However, the schools on this list were recognized in published journal articles as among the best. Eight of these schools were also selected to join the laboratory high schools as part of the “Secondary School Study for Negroes” that was launched in 1938, and included in the associated articles published in various journals. For Paul Laurence Dunbar High School, see Jones, *Educational Excellence: Dunbar High*; also see Anderson, *Education of Blacks*, 210. For Lincoln High School, see Gilbert L. Porter, “A Critical Study of the Reorganization Program of the Lincoln High School, Tallahassee, Florida, with Special Reference to Curriculum Development, 1946-1951” (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 1952). For Lincoln-Grant School, see Eric R. Jackson, *Northern Kentucky* (New York: Arcadia Publishing, 2005). For Dudley High School, see “The Strange History of School Desegregation” (Spring 2004), epublications.marquette.edu. For Booker T. Washington high School, Columbia, S.C., see Anthony L. Edwards, “Booker T. Washington High School 1916-1974): Voices of Remembrance. Portraits of Excellence—African American Teachers in an Urban Segregated High School, Columbia, South Carolina” (paper presentation, Annual Meeting of the Southern History of Education Society, Atlanta, Ga., March 20-21, 1998). Also see Hathaway, “The Class of 1944.” For Dunbar High School in Washington, D.C. see Hundley, *The Dunbar Story*. For I. M. Terrell High School, see M. K. Sparks, “Preparing for What Might Happen: Teaching High School Journalism in a Segregated High School in Fort Worth Texas” (paper
Those living in the regions where these schools were located knew them well and recognized that they provided “exceptional” academic experiences. However, similar to the laboratory high schools, exemplary schools like these have been largely left unexamined by historians. They have missed being mentioned in the critical descriptions of secondary education for African Americans in the South between 1920 and 1954.

Eight of these schools were also selected to join the laboratory high schools as part of the progressive “Secondary School Study for Negroes” that began in 1938. They were then included in the articles published primarily in African American journals. These high schools were also highlighted in independent case studies. It is revealing that in the majority of cases, the authors of the published studies had former connections to the school. In other words, other than the efforts of a former graduate or associate of the school to get the story in the historical record, these schools would have been invisible. Dunbar High School in Washington D. C. is an exception. Although it was Mary Hundley, former teacher and principal of Dunbar High School, who ignited the original interest in the school when she published her book-length study, Dunbar High School in Washington D. C. continued to be cited in dozens of studies that followed. For decades, it was often named as the only example of an academically successful college-preparatory Black high school.⁷⁶


⁷⁶This began to change when Faustine Jones published her study of her alma mater, Educational Excellence: Dunbar High, which she later followed with, Jones and Erma Glasco Davis, Paul Laurence Dunbar High School of Little Rock, Arkansas: Take from Our Lips a Song, Dunbar, to Thee (Virginia Beach, Va.: Donning Co., 2003). For samplings of Dunbar of Washington DC citations, see Barbara A. Sizemore, “Pitfalls and Promises of Effective Schools Research, Journal of Negro Education 54, no. 3 (Summer 1985): 269-299; 270; Kelly Parsely and Carol A. Corcoran, “The Classroom Teacher’s Role in Preventing School Failure,” Kappa Delta Pi Record 39, no. 2 (Winter 2003): 84-87; D. P. Doyle, “Magnet Schools: Choice and Quality in Public Education,” Phi Delta Kappan 66, no. 4 (Dec., 1984): 265-270. Also see Sowell, “Black Excellence,” 3-21. Sowell wrote more than one article on Dunbar as the example of an “excellent” Black school. This article alone was referenced in more than fifty other articles by authors who wanted to include an example of an academically strong Black high school. Also see, Henry S.
While, surely, this list is far from complete, it is certain that these schools may be added to the Black laboratory high schools as evidence of academic “excellence” in a college-preparatory and liberal arts high school curriculum during the era of segregation. Because they were individual community schools, their potential to affect education trends was not as extensive as the laboratory high schools that were associated with a college or university. Laboratory high schools enjoyed a far greater sphere of influence. Lab high schools not only directly shaped the perspectives of their pupils, but also influenced the student teachers who trained in them and the teachers and principals who visited them from other districts and states. Further increasing the laboratory high schools’ power to influence was the fact that the lab schools were managed by progressive college or university presidents who enjoyed a regional or national platform to promote African Americans’ progressive educational ideas in the larger society.

**Intersections and Opportunities in the Progressive Education Era**

“Progressive education” shared the leading characteristic of the larger Progressive movement in general in that there was not one main idea or central thread that could definitively describe what progressive education was. Mirroring the changing society, the range of curricula offered across the nation reflected a jumble of initiatives. Untying tangled theories, strategically re-threading core values of democracy, and striving to weave new patterns for education were called for. Learned scholars offered myriad ideas for changing curricula to meet the needs of

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77 The Dunbar High Schools in Washington, D.C. and Little Rock, Arkansas have become more widely noted for their academic excellence. In recent years, there have been case studies added to the historical portrait that have emphasized the “value” of a “nurturing community.” See, for example, Walker, *Highest Potential*, and Morris and Morris, *Creating Caring*. 

America’s shifting priorities. Asking a dozen professional educators to provide a clear picture of progressive education would result in at least a dozen well-supported arguments.

In 1926, the National Society for the Study of Education dedicated both volumes of the Twenty-Sixth Yearbook to curriculum issues. With a stated mission to “reach a consensus as to what would comprise the new curriculum,” a host of experts participated in the study. Part One was entitled “Curriculum-Making: Past and Present” and analyzed or “cataloged” the different trends across the nation, as well as reviewed the various experiments in curriculum that were conducted in schools, such as private or university affiliated (i.e., White lab schools)—across the country. Part Two, entitled “The Foundations of Curriculum-Making,” presented the positions and statements of major curriculum issues by educational leaders. All authors were White education leaders; no “Negro schools” had been included in the study. Herbert M. Kliebard, in The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893-1958, determined that the study’s objective of building a “consensus” was not realized. Rather, it was a report that communicated a position of “let’s agree to disagree.”

On the national scene, “progressivism dominated at Teachers College,” Columbia University. The social reconstructionist theories championed by its famous “social frontier” progressives intersected with the lives of African American laboratory school directors, teachers, and students in a number of ways. Through a combination of building strategic alliances,

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78 Kliebard, Struggle for Curriculum, 152.


80 Ibid., 51; See James S. Kaminsky, A New History of Educational Philosophy (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1993), 63-71. Also see Tyack and Hansot, Managers of Virtue for a discussion of the progressive educational movement. See also Eugene F. Provenzo, Jr., ed., Social Frontier: A Critical Reader (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2011). The “Social Frontier” referred to a study group led by William Heard Kilpatrick of Teachers College, Columbia University made up of a small group of academics who gathered in 1928 to discuss the social, political, and economic challenges of the period. “The Social Frontier” also referred to the journal that was created by Kilpatrick, Counts, and others of the editorial board in 1934 and considered by some scholars as “the most
collaborating with like-minded progressive educators, conducting research projects, and taking advantage of opportunities to attend and participate in national education workshops and studies, African American educators fashioned their own distinctive approaches to progressive education. While in many ways progressive education for Southern Blacks was just as diverse as the White progressive initiatives, the laboratory high school directors seized the opportunity to position their high schools as progressive centers of influence for Southern Black education. Taking part in the social reconstructionist theories of curriculum development, “a new age of collectivism” also emerged for classically oriented Black laboratory high schools.  

Most significant to African American laboratory high school curriculum crafters were John Dewey, George Counts, and Harold Rugg of Teachers College, Columbia University. Rugg was also the chairman of the committee tasked with compiling the Twenty-Sixth Yearbook, whose work began in 1924. Dewey and Counts argued that education called for a curriculum that taught “tolerance,” “equality,” “brotherhood,” and “fair-mindedness”—key concepts in realizing America’s democratic ideals in the classroom.  

Counts and Rugg believed that a social interesting and important educational journal to emerge from the Great Depression.” See Provenzo, Social Frontier, 286.


82 John Dewey wrote a 1939 essay that discussed the issue of tolerance. “Take … the question of intolerance. Systematic hatred and suspicion of any human group, ‘racial,’ sectarian, political, denotes deep-seated skepticism about the qualities of human nature…. It spreads from distrust and hatred of a particular group until it may undermine the conviction that any group of persons has any intrinsic right for esteem or recognition…. Its presence among us is an intrinsic weakness and a handle for the accusation that we do not act differently from Nazi Germany.” John Dewey in “Democracy and Human Nature” in Debra Morris, Ian Shapiro, The Political Writings by John Dewey (Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett Publishing Co., 1993), 227-228. For specific discussion of “equality, brotherhood,” and “fair-mindedness” in the teaching of democracy, see Counts, Schools Can Teach Democracy, 17-19. These are only two examples. Including democratic ideals in the teaching of children was ubiquitous.
reconstructionist curriculum, inspired by the “discontent about the American economic and social system,” would prepare students to grapple with the preponderance of social injustices.\(^8^3\)

According to historian Ronald Goodenow, Dewey and Counts “link[ed] racial exploitation and discrimination with the structural features of American life”—specifically, the separate but unequal schooling for White and Black youth.\(^8^4\) Although Dewey and Counts approached this theme from different platforms, historians have claimed that few White educators joined them in proclaiming the utterly bogus notion that African American citizens could enjoy equal rights while required by law to remain separated. Of course, this was a concept that resonated with Black educators. Without the freedom to enjoy and hold an equal place in all realms of society, African Americans faced the daily harsh reality that the promise of “separate but equal” education was a pretense.\(^8^5\)

The notion of questioning educational policies and practices and confronting the challenge to realize the ideals of democracy in a multicultural world were the central themes of social reconstructionism, brought to life at Teachers College. James E. Russell, Dean of Teachers College, sanctioned the opening of “New College” in 1932, an undergraduate teacher training program whose mission was taken from the pages of Counts’ theories on social reconstruction. The college’s Bulletin described it as “an experimental and demonstration undergraduate teacher education,” where teachers were encouraged to engage with the social challenges of American society.\(^8^6\) The New College mission called for students to embrace a “special concern for

\(^{83}\) This phrase, “discontent about the American economic and social system,” has been quoted in multiple book length studies of progressive education. See especially, Kliebard, *Struggle for Curriculum*, 154; Counts, *Schools Can Teach Democracy*, 19-20.


\(^{86}\) Murrow, “Preparing Teachers to Remake Society,” 51.
reconstructing educational institutions in light of the needs of a changing society." Emphasis was placed on the expectation of the student to engage in “social and political movements,” following their own democratic beliefs of social justice. The impact of this social reconstructionist pedagogy on African American education was profound.

While the New College had a relatively short life (it closed in 1939), the social reconstructionist approach to teaching remained part of the graduate teacher education core program at Teachers College through 1954. The numerous laboratory high school faculty members who attended graduate school at Teachers College during this period would have been exposed to this pedagogical philosophy of social reconstructionism.

Another intersection for laboratory schools and progressives was through the work of progressive Harold Rugg. Rugg’s social reconstructionist theory framed American society as a nation of immigrants and highlighted the contributions of various minority groups. He asserted that the practice of stereotyping ethnic groups was undemocratic and weakened America’s multicultural power. Rugg envisioned a curriculum that centered on an active engagement in

87 New College Bulletin, 2, as cited in Ibid., 53.

88 By the late 1930s, New College closed and emphasis on social reconstruction waned. Scholar Sonia Murrow, writing about the history of New College at Teachers College, stated that in 1937 “Dean’s Report, Russell claimed that the Social Reconstructionists had failed to make professional education specific, rigorous, and free from politics.... Moreover, he suggested that their efforts veered toward indoctrination and thus could not advance democratic dialogue, which he believed was essential to both education and democracy.” See Murrow, “Preparing Teachers to Remake Society,” 63. See also E. Barnard, “Educators Warned on Utopia Building,” The New York Times, February 24, 1937. The notion of indoctrination continued to be discussed by Dewey and Counts; see Kliebard, Struggle for Curriculum, 195.

89 Murrow, “Preparing Teachers to Remake Society,” 64.

90 There are numerous records that indicate that laboratory school teachers and principals attended graduate school at Teachers College. See “The Alabama State College Laboratory School Student Handbook” (1954-1955); “The Alabama State College Laboratory High School Homeroom Guidance Program” (1947, 1948, 1952, 1955); The Atlanta University Bulletin, “Catalogue Number, 1936-1937,” 11-12, Atlanta University Archives, Atlanta, Georgia. Also see multiple issues of Crisis. It could be argued that such foundations might have encouraged the teachers’ social and political actions during the Montgomery bus boycott and the civil rights movement.
social issues and concerns of social justice. Inherent in the curriculum were America’s contradictions in fundamental policies and practices in politics, economics, and education—contradictions of which African Americans had firsthand experiences. Accordingly, Rugg believed that students should learn to challenge these policies and social practices that diminished the freedoms of democracy. To that end, Rugg led a sweeping initiative to recreate the way classroom teachers and students learned about America’s ideal of constructing and living in a multicultural democratic society.

Harold Rugg, working with his colleague, George Counts, at Teachers College, Columbia University, created and produced a social studies text for classroom use in 1929. He tested his new curriculum by implementing it at Lincoln School, the “experimental school conceived of as a laboratory for testing educational ideas” at Teachers College. By 1939, Rugg’s progressive social studies curriculum, *Man and His Changing Society,* was in the hands of almost three million students across the nation. Among the schools adopting Rugg’s social reconstructionist method for teaching social studies was State Teachers College Laboratory High School in Montgomery, Alabama. As director of the school, H. C. Trenholm had long encouraged the progressive education theories that readied his students to be future leaders and activists in a society that proclaimed, but failed to practice, democracy.

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91 Harold Rugg, *That Men May Understand: An American in the Long Armistice* (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1941), 190. While Harold Rugg was justifiably credited for launching a revamped, progressive social studies curriculum, his social reconstructionist themes also reflected Dewey’s and Counts’ teachings.

92 Rugg leveraged his position at Teachers College, reaching out to his professional contacts and hundreds of former students, asking them to subscribe to his social studies curriculum “sight unseen.” By 1929, he had contracted with publisher Ginn and Company and launched a newly formatted text and workbook for use in high schools, entitled *Man and His Changing Society.* Within a ten-year period, he sold 1,317,960 copies and an additional 2,687,000 workbooks. See Rugg, *That Men May Understand.*

Progressive educational ideas had been threaded through Alabama’s teachers college and laboratory school curriculum since its earliest years in Montgomery. Beginning in 1906 and through 1914, George Washington Trenholm, the future president of Alabama’s State Teachers College, attended the University of Chicago graduate school of education for six summer sessions and was influenced by its prominent educators, including John Dewey and his work with the University of Chicago Laboratory School, which opened in 1896.94

Examples of G. W. Trenholm’s “tips to teachers,” penned in his personal notebook in 1909, provided a peek at his education philosophy. He challenged his teachers to “show an interest in what children [were] reading” and encouraged them to “arouse a deeper conscience for correct expression, and ... a greater love for good literature.”95 In 1921, his Normal School catalogue stated as its purpose to provide “liberal scholastic” training for teacher preparation that encouraged experiential learning in a laboratory.

[This program] especially believes in the doctrine of “learning to do by doing.” Hence it maintains a training school as a laboratory of methods (emphasis added). What the library and laboratory are to the student in academic work, this training school is to his professional work. Under expert guidance the student tests the theories taught in the class rooms. He thus learns to select from among the various educational schemes and devices those best adapted to this work. No student is permitted to graduate who has not done satisfactory work in the training school.96

With a clear emphasis on an academic preparation over vocational, Trenholm’s idea of “learning to do by doing” in his laboratory school reflected Dewey’s philosophy that “the dominant vocation of all human beings at all times is ... intellectual and moral growth,” and as

94 Also during this period George Counts was a graduate student in education at the University of Chicago. Catalogue of Faculty and Students for 1920-1921, 5.


96 “Purpose of the School,” in Catalogue of Faculty and Students, 1920-1921, 13.
such, Trenholm believed, as Dewey taught, that “the only adequate training for occupations is training through occupations.”

Trenholm embraced W. E. B. Du Bois’ position that “education must not simply teach work—it must teach life.” In a commencement brochure for an Alabama school, at which Trenholm was the guest speaker, his handwritten notes reflected his high hopes for Alabama’s African American students. “I want to inspire you to greater and grander endeavors,” Trenholm opined. Here was an example of an African American educator who incorporated within his laboratory school and teachers college progressive educational theories, emanating from the University of Chicago and inspired by nationally renowned intellectuals of the period, including John Dewey and W. E. B. Du Bois.

In a 1912 address at the Alabama State Teachers Association annual convention, Trenholm alerted the members to recognize the need for a liberal arts curriculum. “If we hope to succeed in America,” Trenholm challenged, “a considerable number of our boys and girls must be trained in the arts, sciences, and professions.” Trenholm believed in the importance of a liberal arts curriculum for the success in America, echoing the ideas of Du Bois.

Trenholm organized his ideas for educational and social uplift into twelve points. First, Trenholm believed that the “Methods” implemented “by teachers, principals, and

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99 Trenholm, “G. W. Trenholm Personal Notes and Diaries.”

100 G. W. Trenholm, “Status of Negro Education in Alabama.”

101 Ibid.; Trenholm’s twelve points: “1) Improving Our Methods, 2) Urging Legislation for Improvement of Our Schools, 3) Helpful Publication-Turning on the Light, 4) Building More and Better Schools, 5) Supplementing Public School Fund and Lengthening School Term, 6) Co-Operating with Local Public School Boards, 7) Improving Private and Denominational Schools, 8) Establishing High Schools, 9) Urging brightest students to enter college,
superintendents” needed improvement. Trenholm authored articles and conducted training programs outlining methods for a child-centered curriculum that also encouraged parents as teaching partners in encouraging reading. Secondly, he asserted that legislation was key to improving funding for education. Establishing district high schools was critical to growing educated citizens. As part of this, Trenholm encouraged his constituents to record and publish the contributions African American communities unfailingly made for education of their youth. Evidence of public education funded by personal contributions of African American families was important to set the record straight, as well as to “secure any help possible.” Trenholm believed that communities needed to work together to construct schoolhouses where none existed, or where overcrowding impaired the educational experience. He encouraged African American educators to work with the local school boards. Here again, Trenholm argued, the “public school fund needed to be supplemented.” Increased funds would not only aid in building new schools, but also in increasing the length of the school term; another imperative for improvement in Black education.

While Trenholm also advocated for improving the private and denominational schools, he was a proponent of public education, which he championed throughout his career. He believed a high school education was critical to an educated African American community, and he strongly encouraged schools and communities to work together to add “high school departments” to grammar schools. Trenholm followed Du Bois’ ideas about the Talented Tenth in encouraging “the brightest Negro high school graduates” to “be urged to enter college, fitting themselves for

10) More stress on real college work, 11) Enriching Courses of Study, 12) Remaining in community … do Some Real Good as a Teacher.”

102 Ibid.

103 Ibid. Also see Franklin and Savage, Cultural Capital and Black Education.

104 Trenholm “Status of Negro Education.”

105 Ibid.
larger usefulness.” accordingly, Trenholm recognized the need for African American institutions of higher education to raise the level of their curriculum, stressing the need for “real college work.” And finally, Trenholm “urged teachers to get their own houses, to be an example in ‘home getting,’” which, he believed, would “not only strengthen the teachers’ own position but also … strengthen the communities in which they lived and taught.” One can see that, in these early years, George Washington Trenholm brought progressive principles of education to his laboratory at State Normal School in Montgomery, Alabama.

Of the many faces of progressive education, “most believe” that “John Dewey and his work that began at the University of Chicago” provided the foundation for the “tenets of progressive education.” For five years, members of the National Education Association (NEA) forged “The Cardinal Principles” of progressive education, which were published in 1918:

1. Freedom to Develop Naturally,
2. Interest, the Motive of All Work,
3. The teacher a Guide, Not a Taskmaster,
4. Scientific Study of Pupil Development,
5. Greater Attention to All that Affects the Child’s Physical Development,
6. Co-operation Between School and Home to Meet the Needs of Child-Life,

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106 Ibid.
107 Ibid.
108 Ibid.

These progressive views were woven throughout Trenholm’s personal papers, correspondences, and the normal school catalogues—clear evidence of his effort to apply the “Seven Cardinal Principles of Progressive Education.” Trenholm spoke of offering students an opportunity for “self-discovery.” He described his distinctive professional teacher education program as “emphasizing the how and why as well as the what” (original emphasis). Trenholm promised an education for a life of leadership “in a professional laboratory where new ideas would … meet encouragement” through the guidance of “expert teachers.” These progressive educational concepts became the foundation for the Laboratory High School at Alabama State College, which prepared its students for “professional” careers in education.

Similar to State Teachers College lab school, Atlanta University’s lab high school was also a center for progressive educational advances and influence. Under the direction of progressive educator W. A. Robinson, the lab school was known for its practice of and commitment to progressive education. Robinson believed that schools associated with higher education institutions were responsible for sharing their progressive educational methods.

Atlanta University Laboratory High School was known for its “academic excellence,” having graduated some of the nation’s prominent Black leaders. It was recognized among

111 “Purpose of the School,” in Catalogue of Faculty and Students for 1920-1921, 13.
112 Ibid.
113 Ibid.
African American educators nationally, and by schoolmen and community members regionally, as a laboratory of learning that implemented progressive educational methods that were grounded in scientific study used to guide students toward self-expression. The school served as a frequent host for visiting educators from other districts and states. It was not uncommon for college presidents, after having visited the laboratory high school, to request permission to send their teachers for further observation. Principals and student groups also visited, seeking models for classroom organization, course scheduling, and effective extracurricular programs. Both Atlanta University’s President, John Hope, and the Laboratory High School Director, W. A. Robinson, were aware of their opportunity to influence education and, accordingly, made effective use of their laboratory school as a teaching instrument, a model of best teaching practices, and an experimental laboratory for teaching and learning on multiple levels. Moreover, the social reconstructionist ideas of democracy, emanating from the most prominent leaders in education, provided the ideal banner for Black educators to advance their cause.

“Progressive education,” Robinson declared, had “already begun the task of reemphasizing and reinterpreting the democratic way of life.” For years, democracy for African Americans had “been most seriously challenged.” However, in the era of progressive education, Robinson believed there was a “source of new hope for a better day in social thinking.” Progressive education, Robinson “frankly” declared, had “set up the tenets of democracy as the guiding principles of the education for all people.”

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119 Ibid.

120 Ibid.

121 Ibid.
Robinson’s work at the privately supported Atlanta University Laboratory High School and his public declarations on behalf of Black educators of a “new hope” for “reinterpreting the democratic way of life” for African Americans, captured the profitable, albeit peculiar, position of African American educators in the South during the progressive education movement. The pronouncements by prominent White educators to redirect the curriculum in an effort to better support our democratic society provided African American educators a welcome cloak in which to clothe their initiatives for educational advancement. This gave Black educators a legitimate public education philosophy to advance their curriculum, one that reflected the nation’s public cry for democratic change. It also gave Black educators entry into discussions of recognition, equity, and fairer historical portrayals of African American contributions to American society.

As Aaron Brown observed in his evaluation of accredited Black secondary schools, laboratory high school directors accepted the “obligation to assume a leadership” role in advancing high school education. While “democratic rhetoric permeated educational literature and the position papers of the National Education Association,” Black educators, such as H. C. Trenholm, donned the cloak of progressivism and very carefully advanced their position in the Deep South.

H. C. Trenholm believed that all teachers, regardless of race, had much in common, given their responsibility to educate children for the future. He worked sedulously to develop relationships within the National Education Association so that mutually beneficial objectives could be identified and implemented. While the NEA focused primarily on initiatives in White education, its influence in politics and in the policy arena was impressive. The parallel Black teachers association, the National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools, shared the goal of appropriately preparing its teachers to meet the needs of a changing American society. In the progressive spirit, Trenholm began to make his move to achieve accreditation for Black schools.

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Armed with the powerful rhetoric of the progressive education movement, and holding influential leadership positions in the Alabama State Teachers Association, the National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools, and the National Education Association, he and his colleague, W. A. Robinson, launched an unrelenting campaign to earn high school accreditation. After years of corresponding with the presidents of the NEA and the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (SACS), chairing committees, managing research projects, and implementing textbook revision plans, Trenholm was successful. In 1929, his laboratory high school was the first high school in the state of Alabama to be evaluated and earn SACS accreditation. This was a hugely significant accomplishment, hailed as a sea change for Black education. It meant that those students graduating from a SACS-accredited school had achieved the same high standard of education of any other SACS-accredited school in its region, reflecting readiness for college work at any accredited college or university, Black or White. (Trenholm’s work with accreditation is discussed in greater detail in Chapter V.)

Curriculum Reconstruction and Experimentation: The Black High School Study

At the same time that progressive educators were philosophizing about ways to reconstruct the curriculum “to make pupils vividly and deeply aware of the kind of social world in which they are living,” laboratory school directors were following suit. During this period of tension,

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124 In a survey of ATA and NEA educators, H. C. Trenholm was singled for his contribution to the Black teachers’ association, highlighting the work with accreditation and the joint commission.

125 The evaluation of Black high schools began in 1929, and those who earned Class A accreditation from SACS were officially announced at the 1931 SACS annual meeting.

126 Trenholm’s drive toward accreditation is discussed in greater detail in Chapter V of this study.

turbulence, and transformation, to borrow a phrase from historian Louis Harlan, “there was magic” in the laboratory high schools.\(^{128}\)

This is not to say that, as some scholars have argued, where progressive educators failed to remake society through the school, the laboratory school directors succeeded.\(^{129}\) It is to argue that laboratory high schools were far from being “underdeveloped,” “deplorable,” or an “embarrassment.”\(^{130}\) The laboratory school directors “agreed that one of their purposes was the provision of the best type of educational experiences for pupils.”\(^{131}\) They “studied the ideas of” leading educators and fashioned their own progressive approach that addressed their lived experiences.\(^{132}\) One such tactic that proved beneficial was to participate in the national phenomenon of collaborative studies in secondary education.

By 1930, progressive curriculum reformers believed that the secondary schools were ripe for reconstruction and experimentation.\(^{133}\) It was a period during which multiple secondary school studies were conducted regionally and nationally, some overlapping in time and purpose.

\(^{128}\) Harlan uses the phrase “there was magic in the Southern public school,” referring to the White schools and Southern Whites’ reluctance to share the “magic.” See Harlan, *Separate and Unequal*, 40.

\(^{129}\) Sonia E. Murrow conducted a study of the New College at Teachers College, Columbia University, an “undergraduate laboratory school” that based its philosophy and methods on George Counts, John Dewey, and other social reconstructionists. See Murrow, “Preparing Teachers to Remake Society,” 54. See also David F. Labaree, “Progressivism, Schools and Schools of Education: An American Romance,” *Paedagogica Historica* 41, nos. 1&2 (February 2005): 275-288, 276.


\(^{131}\) Clem, “Administrative Practices in Laboratory Schools,” 55.


The Eight-Year Study, described as “the most important and comprehensive curriculum experiment ever carried on in the U.S.,” was a major study conceived by the Progressive Education Association in 1930.\footnote{Daniel Tanner and Laurel N. Tanner, \textit{Curriculum Development: Theory into Practice} (New York: Macmillan, 1975), 319.} While Black secondary high schools were not considered for inclusion, the study certainly had an influence on them. Understanding the scope of the Eight-Year study is helpful to better appreciate the achievements of the “Black High School Study,” in which the laboratory high schools were key participants.

By the late 1920s, members of the Progressive Education Association (PEA) had perceived that stringent college entrance requirements impeded progressive reform of the high school curriculum. To address that concern, a Commission on the Relation of School and College was formed in 1930, chaired by Wilford Aikin. According to Aikin, the Study had two overarching goals: “To establish a relationship between school and college that would permit and encourage reconstruction in the secondary school” and “To find, through exploration and experimentation, how the high school in the United States [could] serve youth more effectively.”\footnote{Wilford Aikin, \textit{The Story of the Eight-Year Study} (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942), 116.} Thirty-two
high schools were carefully selected, and by the start, twenty-nine schools participated in what came to be known as the “Eight-Year Study.”

The selection criteria for identifying schools for the study included a willingness of the high school staff to experiment with progressive educational theories on curriculum development. According to historian Craig Kridel, “the participating schools had already, or were about to, become some of the most progressive schools in the country.” The twenty-nine schools included thirteen private schools, ten public schools, and six university laboratory schools. Other characteristics considered in the selection process were geographical location and size. But all of the schools were expected to have the leadership, support structure, and demonstrated readiness to experiment and implement progressive pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning.

Over a three-year planning process, in which the participating schools developed their own curricular programs, an “evaluation staff” was formed in 1934, chaired by Ralph W. Tyler of the University of Chicago, to help coordinate methods of evaluation. By 1936, the staff traveled to the participating schools to observe and support the schools in identifying and/or clarifying objectives and measures for performance appraisal. The second part of the Eight-Year Study was tracking the students who entered college and pairing those “experimental” students with students who had graduated from a traditional high school—students who had not been part of

137 The study began with thirty-two schools and finished with twenty-nine.


139 Included among the twenty-nine were University of Chicago Laboratory School and the laboratory school at Teachers College, Columbia University, Lincoln School.

the study. The idea was to compare the pairs of students, analyzing their performance in college (effort was made to match the students as closely as possible, using a specific set of characteristics). In 1942, a five-volume report was published on the details of the various approaches to curriculum development and the commission’s conclusions. It was found that those students who were in the experimental group outperformed those from the traditional high school.

Despite the measurable success of the experimental group, researchers considered that the process of engaging educators in curriculum development was far more meaningful and positive than the outcome of superior measurable performance. The fact that the “Eight-Year Study leaders focused on people rather than on programmatic permanence” recognized “that the most direct and powerful way to improve education [was] through educating educators.” As reported by the commission, the satisfying outcome was not about “‘progressive or non-progressive’ curriculum, or celebrating scoring distinctions, but about determining the “freedom from a fixed pattern of preparation for college versus the traditional preparation.”

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141 The “Eight-Year Study” was so named because it was intended to track students for an eight year period—four years of high school and four years of college. The study lasted for twelve years, from its inception in 1930 to the final reports in 1942.

142 An important aspect of the study was that colleges agreed to offer leeway in admission requirements to the experimental group graduates, if their course of study did not reflect the traditional standards for admission.

143 The performance was considered only “slightly” superior; however, the comprehensive analysis of student performance in all areas of collegiate life concluded that those students from the progressive, experimental groups shined in key areas. See Aikin, The Story of the Eight-Year Study. Also see Kridel and Bullough, Stories of the Eight-Year Study; Kliebard, Struggle for Curriculum.

144 Kridel and Bullough, Stories of the Eight-Year Study, 9.

145 “Commission on Relation of Secondary School and College,” in “Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Director,” PEA Minutes (February 1938-November 1940): TC: 370.62, 38 v. 1. Commission Chairman Aikin reported that the students from the most experimental schools (most often those that were part of a college) outperformed “their peers in terms of academic averages and honors, intellectual traits, and personal and social responsibility.” See Kridel and Bullough, Stories of the Eight-Year Study, 7.
Highly influenced by leading progressive educators of the period, this national study shaped curriculum development throughout the nation. It was respected for its emphasis on experimentation and cooperation, with the aim to reconstruct the curriculum to engage the minds of America’s teens without limitations of regimented college admissions requirements.

In the Southern region during this same period (1935), SACS created a Commission on Curricular Problems and Research, emulating themes in the Eight-Year Study. Charged with conducting a cooperative study between high schools and colleges, its purpose was to develop an “educational program that [would] more adequately meet the needs of our adolescent group.”

Similar to the Eight-Year Study, it was agreed that graduates from the schools in the experimental study would be admitted to college without “the usual restrictions.” Funded by SACS and a grant from the GEB, in June of 1937, Frank C. Jenkins was appointed as the director of the study. After “considerable survey work,” thirty-three secondary schools from eleven Southern states were selected. Schools were required to be willing to “modify their present instructional programs” and agree to a shared approach to analyzing problems in their schools.

The study became known as the “Southern Association Study in Secondary Schools and Colleges.” Central was a democratic approach to constructing a “scientific method” for analysis. In other words, schools were expected to work democratically within their communities—administration, teachers, students, parents, and community members—to experiment with curriculum construction that would address the special needs of the “adolescent group” while producing “desirable outcomes not now being achieved by our schools.”

147 Ibid., 323.
149 Yeuell, “Southern Association,” 323.
150 Ibid.
notion that each member of the community—student, parent, or teacher—was “accorded a status equal to that accorded any other.”

Jenkins and his support staff were there to help guide the process, not dictate a specific pattern or approach.

Gladstone H. Yeuell, head of the department of secondary education at the University of Alabama and executive committee member of the Commission on Curricular Problems and Research of the Southern Association, reported that the “main contributions of the study [had] been to convince teachers, administrators, and supervisors that real change, or progress, [could] be obtained only by democratic, cooperative effort on the part of everyone concerned.”

Yeuell attributed this positive outcome to the participants’ ownership of the process. When the “goals are their own,” Yeuell concluded, teachers and administrators “work enthusiastically toward their achievement.”

Echoing Yeuell’s celebration of democracy in action were the observations of V. M. Sims of the University of Alabama and E. A. Waters of the University of Tennessee, two former members of the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. At the conclusion of the Southern Association study, Sims and Waters declared that “the most important outcome of the Study” was the proof that “democracy works.” From their perspectives, the study successfully demonstrated the advantages of “marshaling the total intelligence” of diverse and invested participants, focusing on “problems of common good.”

The various schools had identified specific “problems,” each unique to its community, which they deemed important for high schools to address. Reported in the commission’s

151 Sims et al., “Experimental Programs,” 146.

152 Yeuell, “Southern Association,” 323. [emphasis mine]

153 Ibid.

154 Sims et al., “Experimental Programs,” 140.

155 Ibid, 147.
monograph was the “urgent need for a series of investigations designed to discover ways in which the schools [could] contribute more directly to the betterment of living within the communities they serve[d].”

Multiple progressive education theories of the period were reflected in this study, such as improved community-school relations, curriculum and teaching designed to meet the special needs of adolescence, individuation of curriculum to address differences in learning, development of guidance programs, among others. Primary was the ideal of democracy—the notion that each individual had a right to contribute and participate.

However, their neighbors, African American students, teachers, and administrators, had not been accorded an equal status in this study of secondary schools and colleges in the South. They could not exercise their right to contribute and participate because they were barred from doing so. This was the segregated South, where most White participants did not seem to see the contradictions in their “lived experiences.” The notion of “according a status equal to that accorded any other” was not applied to African Americans. Similarly, the celebrated notion that “real progress” could be made when those who are involved had the freedom to set their own goals included the silent caveat, except for those who were segregated by law from community parks, libraries, and Southern (White) universities.

Clearly, though, these themes of “democracy” and the desire to create curriculum that improved the communities they served harmonized nicely with the African Americans’ social reconstructionist views. Black education leaders were not satisfied to stand back and watch during this era of curriculum revision and experimentation. The ethos of the progressive education movement provided a rich opportunity for intrepid Black Southern education leaders.


Laboratory high school director H. C. Trenholm at State Teachers College in Montgomery, Alabama, and W. A. Robinson at Atlanta University proposed to SACS and the General Education Board (GEB) that a similar study be conducted that would analyze progressive movements in the education of Black secondary schools in the Southern region. Reasoning that since much was learned from the secondary school study for White education, Trenholm argued that, so, too, African American education could be advanced by working with a controlled set of schools.

Trenholm argued that such a study offered multiple benefits. First, it would enrich the education of the students, teachers, and administrators engaged, as they would be part of a sophisticated progressive educational initiative. As “member” schools in the study, it would enhance communication and professional exchanges among the African American educators involved. It had the potential to open pathways for Black educators to connect with renowned educational professionals at the nation’s leading universities. It would also dramatically increase the power to influence African American education throughout the South, as member schools could share their experiences with each other and dozens of “non-member” schools in their regions. These exchanges and the collaborative emphasis of the study would help build Black teacher solidarity, strengthening the Black teachers’ associations. And it would illuminate the high quality of work of the Southern Black high schools, for both Black and White audiences.

Further, the associated reporting might open the door to more informed discussions of the inequitable funding between Black and White public schooling. While the quality of the curriculum and teaching would be revealed, so too would the extremely limited resources under which these high schools had been functioning.

The grant was awarded by the GEB, and the “Secondary School Study for Negroes” began in 1940, six years into the “Eight-Year Study” and three years into the Southern Association’s

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high school study. W. A. Robinson was appointed director of the study. Robinson echoed Trenholm’s assertion that just as the White schools “had advanced sufficiently” as a result of participating in the study, high schools for African Americans could do the same. Robinson observed that Black high schools “were surely facing educational situations involving many of the same problems and some others unique to our minority group status.”

This was certainly the case. Through the decades of the 1920s and 1930s, Trenholm and Robinson, among other Black educators, had implemented progressive curricula and teaching in their laboratory schools, holding on to the belief of the power of a good college preparatory education for social uplift. During this time, the economic miseries of the Great Depression had caused many institutions to suffer; none more than African American educational institutions in the Deep South. Even so, Trenholm invited public scrutiny of his laboratory high school and those schools throughout the South that would be selected for the study. With a tortured history of blatant underfunding and in an environment where the leading Black scholarly journals regularly published articles on the poor state of Black schooling, Trenholm insisted that Black education would ultimately benefit from being held to the same regional or national “standards” used to judge any school—Black or White.

Accordingly, the criteria for selecting “member” high schools for the “Secondary School Study for Negroes” (SSSN) were similar to those used by the highly lauded White high school studies, whose member schools were respected for their achievements and progressive methods. Such criteria included high school’s demonstration of “intelligent and promising” administrative leadership “from the standpoint of training, energy, capability, and general alertness to

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161 The insistence to be judged by the same standards as any other school was at the core of Trenholm’s strategy to improve Black education. See H.C. Trenholm and W. A. Robinson to N. W. Walker, President Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 18 November 1926.
educational progress.” Selected schools were to have already evidenced “an intelligent approach to educational problems” and, in that vein, promised to enthusiastically commit to welcoming experimentation and, if deemed appropriate, embrace reconstruction of their curriculum and teaching methods. Echoing the experience of the Eight-Year high school study, this inferred that the schools selected were progressive in their own right, as well as each having a well-educated faculty, a parent community willing to support the endeavor, and a public school system prepared to support the experimentation. Also noteworthy was the criterion that required the member high schools to “be so situated as to influence the development of other schools in the state.”

The state agents of each of the eleven states that were under SACS purview were expected to nominate three schools from his (agent’s) state that would meet the above criteria. The schools selected were considered among the most progressive Black schools in the nation, and their goal was to examine ways in which teaching and learning might be improved. Of the sixteen high schools that met the selection criteria, six were laboratory schools associated with Black colleges and universities, eight were public schools, and two were private high schools. State Teachers College Laboratory High School, Montgomery, Alabama, was among the sixteen member schools. Member schools included:

1. Drewry Practice High School of Talladega College, Alabama
2. State Teachers College Laboratory School, Montgomery, Alabama
3. Atlanta University Laboratory School, Atlanta, Georgia
4. Natchitoches Parish Training School, Natchitoches, Louisiana
5. Southern University and Agricultural and Mechanical College Demonstration School, Scotlandville, Louisiana

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163 Ibid.
164 Ibid.
6. D. Webster Davis Laboratory School of Virginia State College for Negroes, Ettrick, Va.
7. Lincoln High School, Tallahassee, Florida
8. A. S. Staley High School, Americus, Georgia
9. Lincoln-Grant School, Covington, Kentucky
10. Magnolia Avenue High School, Vicksburg, Mississippi
11. Dudley High School, Greensboro, NC
12. Booker T. Washington High School, Rocky Mount, NC
14. Pearl High School, Nashville, Tennessee
15. M. Terrell High School, Fort Worth, Texas
16. Huntington High School, Newport News, Virginia

With a two-person administrative “central office” in place, the sixteen “member” schools “embarked on a study for the improvement of education in the Southern region” in 1940. Teachers were invited to actively participate in discussions, visitations, and workshops with the idea that a hands-on, creative, and democratic process would invite a more comprehensive understanding of suggested reforms, resulting in a sense of ownership of the implementation phase by the classroom teachers. “All believed that better education meant broader opportunities for intelligent participation in and responsibility for democratic living.” As reported by the study’s associate director, W. H. Brown, one of the most important aspects of the study was the plan to eventually reach as many other schools as possible, influencing curriculum direction throughout the South.

This study was not about collecting data for a status report on Black high school education. It was meant to be a creative process where the member schools introduced and experimented with the various progressive methods. As such, “purposes of the secondary school study” were identified as opportunities for exploration, experimentation, and evaluation.

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167 Ibid., 121.
168 Ibid., 129.
169 Ibid. W. H. Brown, Associate Director of the Secondary School Study (address, Association Annual Meeting, 1941): 45-46.
Member schools of the Black High School Study identified specific “problems,” which reflected the progressive strains of the period. A full range of issues was probed, such as: How does one learn? How can democracy be experienced in the classroom? How can curriculum be linked to the needs of the community? and How can the diverse needs of a diverse body of students be met by engagement in the planning process?¹⁷⁰

Distinctive to the Black High School Study were social reconstructionist approaches to exploring the “critical needs of Negro children” in a segregated society.¹⁷¹ Considered to be “one of the most pressing needs of the schools [was] help in planning a curriculum” that provided “for more realistic teaching in science and social studies.”¹⁷² Such inquiries included highly provocative questions that challenged the perceptions and role of African Americans in science, politics, social science, and the economy from a historical perspective and in contemporary society. Such “problems” to be explored included: “Does the Negro’s racial inheritance incapacitate him for significant achievement in a world civilization?” “How is the effort of the Negro to achieve security in the American social order related to the efforts of other minority groups?” and “Can participation by the Negro in labor organizations result in desirable improvement in his social, economic, and political position?”¹⁷³ These were courageous questions coming from high school teachers and administrators located in the Jim Crow South.

The actual work got underway in the summer of 1940, when Atlanta University hosted a six-week workshop.¹⁷⁴ As later workshops were held, invitations were extended to the non-

¹⁷⁰ Robinson, “Co-Operative Effort,” 534-535. See Appendix G for the original wording and complete list of questions or problems.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 536.

¹⁷² Ibid., 538. See Appendix H for a complete listing of issues.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 535. The second and third conferences were held at Hampton Institute in 1941 and North Carolina College in 1942, respectively (the former, not having representative membership in the study).
member Black colleges in the area to encourage student teachers to attend so that they might be exposed to the latest trends in social reconstructionist curriculum and teaching. Clearly, such workshops would have also reinforced solidarity among the Black educators, with a message to press on in improving the lives of African Americans through education.

Funding was meager. The staff to support this study—the “central office”—consisted of only two people, the Director, W. H. Robinson, and “his staff associate,” W. H. Brown, both of whom had held leadership positions in the Atlanta University Laboratory School. At the time of the study, Robinson was Principal of the Laboratory High School, and W. H. Brown was Dean of the Graduate School of Education and Director of the Bureau of Educational Research at the North Carolina College at Durham. Together, they were responsible for the herculean task of coordinating the collaboration among the member schools in the eleven states, coordinating with SACS, and organizing cooperation with non-member schools throughout the South. This included organizing interstate and intra-state conferences and workshops, and creating and implementing a comprehensive communication program that included “bulletins, newsletters, magazine articles, and other materials relative to the works of the study”—all on an extremely limited budget.

The spirit of collaboration and social reconstructionism abounded, reflective of the progressive attitudes of the participating schools. Each accepted that there was no one way to approach a problem, but collegially worked together to identify possible solutions. Particularly helpful was the experienced consultants’ sharing of their successful experiences with specific curricular approaches. This applied theory to practice, and Black teachers were able to learn, adapt, and apply them to their own teaching. Students were encouraged to engage in current affairs, learn and use scientific methods of inquiry to distinguish opinions from facts, and learn

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methods for researching “pertinent information to help them plan effective ways of making use of the information for their purposes.”\textsuperscript{177}

The directors of the study creatively reached out to other education workshops that were occurring throughout the country and suggested a cooperative effort. In an article about the study published in \textit{The School Review}, Robinson suggested a possible solution to the chronic problem of “extremely limited” funding. He proposed cooperation with “other high schools” in “other sections of the country” that, he asserted, were essentially struggling with similar challenges.\textsuperscript{178} Built into the “cooperative” design of the Southern study was the idea of exchanging ideas with members of the Southern Association Study in Secondary Schools and Colleges (the White high school study). Robinson reported that there was “some” support among the teachers and administrators participating in the White and Black secondary school studies, which Robinson reported as beneficial. Further cooperation extended to Black colleges and White universities across the nation. This reflected positive movement toward the underlying aims of the study—to look for opportunities to demonstrate shared experiences, begin to blur the rigid line of segregation between the schools, and raise awareness of limited funding.

Similar to the Eight-Year study, matriculation to college and understanding admission expectations were also considered. Equally important, the study aimed to educate college professors about the latest progressive secondary school curricula. Contact with the regional Black colleges was facilitated by H. C. Trenholm, who served as Executive Director of the Cooperative Negro College Study, while also participating as a member school in the Secondary School Study.\textsuperscript{179} The cooperative college project was created as a service agency for Black colleges. In his dual role, Trenholm enabled faculty from the Secondary School Study to partner

\textsuperscript{177} Robinson, “Co-Operative Effort,” 538.

\textsuperscript{178} Ibid., 539.

\textsuperscript{179} Ibid. 536-537, 539.
with the Cooperative Negro College Study to “explore more adequate teaching procedures” through its work with other universities.\(^{180}\) With limited funding from the GEB, some Black educators participated in the cooperative exchange projects in 1942. The first of such projects was run by Stanford University under the direction of Dean Grayson Kefauver and Dr. I. James Quillen and was entitled “Social Education Investigation.”\(^{181}\) Participants of this project were able to first work for several weeks with the participating high schools from the greater area of Palo Alto, California, and then also attend an eight-week workshop with the area teachers. African American teachers were given the opportunity to “not only evaluate the work of the schools” that were part of the project, but also “work on group and individual problems in connection” with a social studies curriculum that could be effectively applied to the needs of Southern schools.\(^{182}\)

The second project was led by Professor S. R. Powers of Teachers College, Columbia University. It was entitled, “Natural Science Project of the Bureau of Educational Research in Science.” Members of the Black high school study who attended this conference co-mingled with attendees from the cooperating high schools from the northeastern region investigation.

The third group attacked the issue of reading, attending the sixth annual reading conference at the University of Chicago. Working with Professor William S. Gray, these teachers focused on the reading problems peculiar to the “Negro schools and colleges.”\(^{183}\)

Reading and writing had been reported as a long-time concern in segregated schools in the South. The laboratory schools were highlighted as examples of strong reading and writing programs. Through their example and work in self-analysis, critical peer evaluation, and hosting

\(^{180}\) Ibid., 539.


\(^{182}\) Ibid.

workshops, laboratory schools were instrumental in improving curriculum and teaching in reading.  

Building on the emphasis of inspiring democratic leadership, a progressive concept discussed at the workshops was the notion of student council organizations. Associate Director W. H. Brown reported that another measurable improvement evidenced by the member schools was a marked enhancement in the relationship between teachers and students. As evidence, he cited that fifteen of the sixteen schools either already had an organized student council or initiated the student government while participating in the study. The notion of student involvement in governing themselves directly reflected the overarching goal of educating for democratic leadership.

Data from the study indicated that, particularly in the laboratory schools, the shared experiences of democratic, cooperative teaching approaches resulted in a pedagogy that addressed the needs of the whole child. “Teachers [were] not only helping children to meet their academic needs … but also actively concerned with the personal problems and with the social growth of children.”

The research revealed that all of the member schools included studies directly related to “Negro life,” with special emphasis given to the unique historical period—America’s involvement in World War II. The beliefs in the ideals of democracy that were expressed in philosophies, mission statements, or objectives in schools throughout the nation were reflected in the concerns and discussions in the Black High School Study, as well.

The “cooperative workshops,” which were the major “hands on” conferences held on the college campuses, were led by “more experienced” teachers, many from the laboratory schools.

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185 Ibid, 124.
186 Ibid, 124; Brown cited the laboratory schools as examples.
Experienced workshop leaders visited other non-member schools, “eager to have their cooperation,” accepted visitors to their own laboratory classrooms, and counseled them on how “to modify” their programs to more closely reflect the successful experiences of the member schools.  

The SSSN Associate Director W. H. Brown, who held an M.S. from Ohio State University and a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, hailed the workshops as being “near the top” of the most “effective” outcomes of the study because it promoted professional growth of African American teachers. In his study published in *The Journal of Negro Education*, Brown provided a detailed report on the workshops—where they were held, what topics were covered, the formation of progressive educational philosophies, and development of community consciousness. All the while, Brown astutely clothed his comments in the apt description of strengthening “democratic principles.”

By example, the workshops illustrated democratic living and thereby deepened the conviction among teachers that their own schools and classrooms [could] be operated to advantage on democratic principles. This outcome was mentioned most frequently by teachers participating in the three workshops and by consultants following their visits in schools. In many cases, adaptation of democratic principles to life in schools gave many Negro teachers and pupils their first opportunity to experience democracy.

The dual interpretation of the teachers and pupils’ novelty in “experiencing democracy” can be easily discerned.

As a follow-up to the study, W. H. Brown conducted an in-depth participants’ survey, the results of which indicated highly positive perceptions of the workshops. Overall, Brown

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187 This was also supplemented by “journals,” which some schools used and distributed to non-member schools. See Robinson, “Secondary School Study,” *Phylon*, 151-56; W. H. Brown, “An Experimental Study of Workshop-Type Professional Education for Negro Teachers,” *Journal of Negro Education* 14, no. 1 (Winter 1945): 48-58; 57.


189 Ibid., 52.
concluded that there was high praise for the SSSN by all involved and emphasized the excellent outcome of increasing the professionalization of African American teachers.

The study was affirmed by outside authorities, as well. State education departments and “state agents” frequently referred schools to the Study for some type of assistance.” In a 1944 report, Robinson claimed that “the Study gradually built up a group of more than a hundred high schools which [were] called ‘contact’ schools as opposed to member schools.” In an effort to reach as many schools throughout the South as possible, these “contact” schools aided in getting social reconstructionist ideas out, while also “proving that school development could be achieved by any school and was not the exclusive privilege of a small group of schools chosen because of any superior advantages.” As a result of collaborating with each other, and cooperating across studies, races, and regions of the nation, member schools emerged as enriched leaders in education.

A Paucity of Studies on African American Education

These studies offered documented evidence of progressive and influential secondary education for African Americans. But other than the articles authored by the study’s participants, the work of these college preparatory high schools seemed to remain invisible in the histories of Black secondary schooling. Historian Ronald Goodenow made a similar observation in his study that was published in Phylon, a scholarly journal published at Atlanta University. Goodenow noted that the “vast literature” produced as part of the Black high school study showed that it

191 Ibid.
192 Ibid.
193 Atlanta University closed its laboratory high school in 1942.
advocated progressive education’s methodology and theory” and the associated “prime virtues” of “democratic philosophy.”195 He further observed that “even though black journals contained innumerable references to it,” the work of these Black progressives was “totally ignored.”196

Goodenow’s study was included as a chapter in Education and the Rise of the New South, published in 1981.197 While he might be commended for including reference to the study, actually, these works did little to shed light on the study’s accomplishments. Rather than elaborating on the multiple achievements of the study (which he briefly referenced), he instead discussed the curriculum guides generated by the Southern Association’s (White) high school study. Goodenow asserted that White educators used progressive theories to “tolerate the maintenance of segregation.”198 As one of the two examples he highlighted, Goodenow quoted from Virginia’s guide. It recommended a curriculum that “should lead to the cooperation of individuals within [Goodenow’s emphasis] groups ... the aims (of which) would grow out of existing social life.”199 Goodenow asserted that the guides provided for the “continuation of rigid ‘bi-racialism’ or segregation and assumed that the black people would continue to occupy an inferior economic position.”200

Considering the period in which Goodenow was writing (when the South was still struggling to act on the Supreme Court ruling in Brown v. Board of Education twenty years earlier), one can understand why “the message” was one of Southern Whites’ repressive tactics.

195 Ibid.

196 Ibid. Goodenow’s findings were also published in History of Education Quarterly. See Ronald K. Goodenow, “Progressive Educator,” 365-394.


199 Ibid.

200 Ibid.
However, alternatively, considering the well-documented achievements of the high schools in the study, the excellent training and ability of the participating teachers, and the recorded advances from the study itself, it is unfortunate that, once again, the story was of White domination instead of Black agency, achievement, and clear progress in secondary education. Moreover, it provided an unused opportunity to highlight the sophisticated work of the Black laboratory schools.

This disregard of African Americans’ achievements was not restricted to high school educators. Historian and social critic Manning Marable analyzed the inimitable contributions of renowned intellectual and sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois. A brilliant researcher and prescient social critic of his time, Marable pointed out that even Du Bois’ work was often rebuffed by publishers of prominent White journals. “We remained unrecognized in learned societies and academic groups,” Du Bois lamented. “We rated merely as Negroes studying Negroes, and after all,” Du Bois observed, “what had Negroes to do with America or science?”

Ullin W. Leavell, professor of education at the University of Virginia, having completed his own dissertation on philanthropy in Black education, traced the paucity of studies that considered Black education during the period 1920 to 1932. Particularly, he examined studies conducted on Negro education by the faculty and staff of Peabody College for Teachers, recognized for its 1914 commitment to “promote educational programs and activities in behalf of Negro education.” Over a sixteen-year period, 1916 to 1932, he found a total of fifty-seven studies, including dissertations, theses, and published articles “on topics related to the Negro and Negro education,” with titles that included *The White Superintendent and the Negro Schools in North Carolina*, “Investigation of Race Difference in the Development of a Standard Test in Algebra,” “Vocabulary of Negro High School Pupils,” and “Relative Intelligence of White and

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Negro Children.” Leavell asserted that “special training” of White administrators was needed to ensure that the “dual aspects of education in the South” could be properly attended to. Leavell argued that “instruction must go hand in hand with research,” which, in Leavell’s estimation, would quicken the lethargy of (White) education leaders, administrators, and researchers and help them better understand the unequal conditions created by a dual system of education from an educated, “discriminating” platform rather than one of ignorance or prejudice. It was only through “informed minds and enlightened appreciations” that the “best means [could] be determined for” what was required in a dual system of schooling.

Trenholm completely supported additional studies of African American education, but using the so-called “standardized” tests to analyze achievement he could not support. Black educators also conducted research to enlighten scholars about the flaws of such tests. For example, “statistics indicate[d] definitely that intelligence quotients of young children [could] be raised by environment stimulation,” specifically, that I.Q. could be raised by “the positive effect of a favorable environment.” Trenholm knew that “I.Q. alone may be a false prophet, and its use should be supplemented by other agencies—best of all perhaps by brief ‘exploratory’ courses in the more difficult and abstract subjects of study.”

Trenholm would have had evidence that curricula at laboratory high schools had provided students with sufficient opportunities for such study, as seen in the success of their students in

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203 Ibid., 158.
204 Ibid., 161-164. Leavell asserted that such education for White superintendents should include: “(1) Facts about the history of Negro education, (2) the psychology of the Negro, (3) methods of creating better attitudes among white leaders in the communities of their work, and (4) specific training in the administration of separate schools for Negro and white children.”
205 Ibid.
206 William C. Bagley, “The Twilight of the IQ” (position paper on IQ research, State Teachers College, Montgomery, circa 1930s).
207 Ibid.
college and in their careers. During this period, for example, the five Alabama State Teachers Association presidents that followed H. C. Trenholm’s presidency had all attended laboratory high schools and had gone on to earn masters and doctoral degrees from prestigious schools, becoming leaders in education.

**ASTA Presidents**

1933 J. F. Drake - graduated from Talladega Practice [laboratory] High School, earned his masters at Columbia University and his Ph.D. at Cornell University.

1935 C. W. Hayes - graduated from State Normal High School in Tennessee, attended Columbia University and earned his master’s degree at New York University.

1937 A. Heningburg - graduated from Tuskegee Institute High School, earned a B.A. diploma at Sorbonne, Paris, France, and a Ph.D. at New York University.


1939 Z. S. Evans - graduated from Alabama State College Laboratory School, earned her B.S., M.A., at Alabama State College, and Ed.D. at the University of Michigan.\(^{208}\)

In spite of the demonstrated abilities of these high-achieving college preparatory laboratory high schools, in the rare occasions when Black secondary education was included in prominent (White) scholarly journals, it was highly likely that the “interesting” work of an industrial arts school would be cited as an example.\(^{209}\) Certainly, there were numerous fine schools that provided an industrial arts or vocational high school education to their students. These high schools were highly valued by their communities and offered their students a caring and

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\(^{208}\) These presidents followed H. C. Trenholm’s presidency. See Gray, *History of Alabama State Teachers Association*, 161-164.

\(^{209}\) *An Education Study of Alabama*, 269.
nurturing community, one which was treasured by their students. The argument here is that the liberal arts college preparatory high schools also existed. Moreover, their lived history has not only been invisible, but in the majority of studies that examined secondary education, the inference has been that such high schools did not exist. A more complete picture must be rendered.

For example, it is illuminating to examine an analysis of curriculum development in this period found in J. Minor Gwynn’s Secondary Education in the South published in 1946. In this study, entitled “Trends in Curriculum Development,” Gwynn argued that there were “five stages of growth in curriculum development of the public secondary schools in the South” during the period 1900 to 1942:

1. The classical pattern, 1900-1929;
2. The movement for state or county agricultural high schools, 1907-1915;
3. Emergence of the general curriculum, 1917-1930;
4. The system-wide curriculum revision movement, 1930-1942; and
5. Controlled curriculum experiments, 1934-1942.

Noting that Gwynn’s first stage is described as “the classical pattern, 1900-1929,” it is interesting that he does not include even one example of a Black high school participating in the predominant trend of the period. While the bulk of Gwynn’s research did not deconstruct

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curriculum initiatives by race, Gwynn noted that the tremendous growth of African American secondary education that began during this period was largely due to the efforts of the General Education Board and the Slater Fund, both of which supported an industrial curriculum and county training schools. Gwynn’s observation that the growth of African American secondary education centered around industrial arts not only inferred that Black high schools were out of step with the curriculum trend but, more to the point, suggested that Black high schools were doing well with their own brand of industrial education, thanks to the generous efforts of Northern philanthropists.\(^{213}\)

No mention was made of African Americans partaking in or having success with this classical curriculum trend. Gwynn’s study relied on surveys of this early period, such as Jones’ *Negro Education* study of 1917 and those conducted by the Slater Fund and General Education Board, all of which celebrated manual training and industrial education curriculum. All the while, G. W. Trenholm had developed his teachers college, the laboratory high school, and extension program, reaching multiple counties throughout Alabama, while also strongly advocating a liberal arts college preparatory curriculum to the Black teachers’ associations and communities. H. C. Trenholm had continued on this path, expanding the reach of the liberal arts extension program and earning regional accreditation for his laboratory high school.\(^{214}\) Once again, this is evidence of historical analysis that ignored African Americans’ successful initiatives in college preparatory programs.

Considering the significance of historical context, both in the period of curriculum development, as well as when Gwynn and other educators were analyzing the history of

\(^{213}\) Gwynn identified “Five stages of growth in the curriculum of the public secondary schools in the South,” among them was “The classical pattern, 1900-1929.” Gwynn made no specific reference to education or curriculum development specific to African Americans other than to note that “In the meantime, County Training Schools for Negroes were rapidly being established with aid from the Slater Fund, the General Education Board, and the Southern States and Counties.” He made no source reference to indicate on what data this statement was based. See “Trends in Curriculum Development,” 116-125.

\(^{214}\) G. W. Trenholm, “Status of Negro Education in Alabama.”
curriculum growth, it is important to remember that Alabama’s State Teachers College was not only one of just four state-supported teacher training institutions in the South, but grew to become among the most influential teachers colleges in Alabama.\textsuperscript{215} As such, its laboratory school would have been a good candidate for inclusion in Gwynn’s study.

Gwynn’s third stage, “general curriculum,” emerged in response to the importance placed on “standards and electives” during the period 1917 to 1930. Using North Carolina and Virginia education manuals from 1938 and 1942 (from White high schools), Gwynn found that college preparatory high schools placed “major emphasis on the classical, the academic subjects, and preparation for college.”\textsuperscript{216} He also found that “Business Training” was allowed to be substituted for math and foreign language for two units of study. The “units” of study were the Carnegie units. A “Carnegie unit” was developed in 1906 to standardize measurements of what high schools were teaching, to respond to colleges’ needs to better assess high school graduates’ preparedness for college level work.\textsuperscript{217} This standard for general curriculum was a huge aspect of the transformation of high schools during this period.

Although not mentioned in Gwynn’s study, laboratory high schools associated with the Black teachers colleges made use of the general curriculum unit. Some high schools had more years of experience than others, but by 1930, these on-campus “practice,” “demonstration,” or “laboratory” high schools exemplified the best teaching practices of the period and reflected the latest trends in academic curriculum development. Moreover, it was common for these laboratory schools to be the only high school in the county open to African American youth. Examples of such high schools that equaled or exceeded standards set for (White) high schools in the South

\textsuperscript{215} “Alabama’s Teacher-Progress Efforts of 1932”; Hatch, “In-Service Teacher Education,” 26.

\textsuperscript{216} Gwynn, “Trends in Curriculum Development,” 125.

\textsuperscript{217} For example, if a student’s high school report indicated one unit of study for sophomore level science, this meant that the student spent approximately five hours a week studying a science subject for the entire school year, which, by year end, would total approximately 120 hours. See Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, \textit{First Annual Report}, October 15, 1906.
and unmentioned in Gwynn’s study, as well as other studies of Black secondary education conducted by researchers during this period, included Drewry Practice High School of Talladega College, Alabama; State Teachers College Laboratory School, Montgomery, Alabama; Atlanta University Laboratory School, Atlanta, Georgia; Natchitoches Parish Training School, Natchitoches, Louisiana; Southern University and Agricultural and Mechanical College Demonstration School, Scotlandville, Louisiana; and D. Webster Davis Laboratory School of Virginia State College for Negroes, Ettrick, Virginia.

Striving to meet the need for certified teachers, the State Teachers College had developed a healthy Summer School and Extension Program in twenty-six counties. Constructed to offer flexibility in both time and place, the summer schools and extension programs did much to reach the African American teaching force throughout the state and region. As part of its four-year secondary high school education, it gained an early reputation for successfully graduating teachers who passed the State Teachers Examination (an examination well known to be a hurdle for Black teachers seeking certification).  

While these education leaders substantially contributed to African American education, no articles were published on the academic strengths of laboratory high schools or positive profiles of well-educated, effective laboratory high school teachers. As historians, such as V. P. Franklin and Michael Fultz, have pointed out, the efforts of these and other African American progressive educators were “overlooked, ignored, and not sufficiently or publicly appreciated” in

218 Williams, “State Normal School”; Jones, *Negro Education*, vol. 1:74; H. C. Trenholm referenced the difficulties the state exam had presented for Black teachers trying to gain state certification, which goes to the importance and challenge of the exam, and the importance of accredited programs. See H. C. Trenholm, “The Accreditation of the Nero High School,” *Journal of Negro Education* 1, no. 1 (1932): 34-43.

219 Black laboratory high schools have been referenced as key participants in the Secondary School Study for Negroes, 1940-1946 and the Accrediting Associations studies of accredited schools (both discussed in this study). Also laboratory schools have been mentioned in biographical accounts of individuals who attended them. A total of six dissertations and master theses written over a period of 22 years, 1936 to 1958, examined aspects of laboratory schools. Also see Tyack and Hansot and their discussion of the underrepresentation of scientific research of African American education during this period. Tyack and Hansot, *Managers of Virtue*, 88, 127-28.
scholarly journals. There was a “generally negative discussion of African American teachers among African American educators and other black intellectuals during the 1890-1940 period.” Examination of laboratory schools across the South might have contributed an enlightened and different view of Black secondary education during this time. Analyses of a collection of schools that had demonstrated a commitment to an academic curriculum over the long term, taught by consistently well-trained faculty, might have presented a more comprehensive rendering than the abundant studies capturing the “underdeveloped” secondary education.

However, it is important to keep in mind the other currents of the period. Paralleling the growth of the Black high school and the good work of the laboratory schools was the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and its long-term mission to reverse *Plessy v. Ferguson*. There was a concerted effort on the part of Black educators to emphasize the comparatively inferior and unjust circumstances of Black education throughout the South infected by the segregated dual school systems. And, as has been previously noted, material was plentiful.

Edgar L. Morphet’s analysis, “Influence of the Southern State Work-Conference,” was published in 1946, the same year as John Minor Gwynn’s study. Morphet echoed the chorus of researchers and politicians who bemoaned the South’s “difficult educational problem” of

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221 It was not uncommon for studies of secondary White schools to include college associated laboratory schools, which were highlighted for their progressive educational ideas and effective outcomes. Scholars continued to use the Thomas Jesse Jones study on which to base their assessments of Black education. As a study in 1947 argued, “Although much progress has been made since 1916 in public education for Negroes in the South, the Thomas Jesse Jones Study is still widely quoted.” See Aaron Brown, “Accredited Secondary Schools,” 22.

222 *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537 (1896). The case that constitutionalized segregation, justifying the ruling against Plessy, based on customs of the period. It included the language “separate but equal.” Although the case applied to traveling in railroad cars, it set the precedence for segregation in all aspects of society in the South.

223 See Thompson, “Address at the Meeting of the World Federation of Education Associations.”
supporting separate school systems. Among his recommendations was a suggestion for school leaders to hold interstate conferences for state education representatives. Experience-sharing, he reasoned, should prove helpful in sorting through problems and solutions. Similar to Gwynn’s study, Morphet’s research was not an analysis of the dual systems of education by race. In fact, it inferred a focus on the White school system. However, to support his recommendation, Morphet cited the success of the Black schools, which had “been meeting annually to work out solutions for common problems.” Morphet lauded their substantial progress. Among the key organizers and hosts of the Black schools’ annual conferences were the leaders of the laboratory high schools. Faculty of these schools attended and led progressive workshops. These secondary school workshops reflected the fourth and fifth stages of curriculum development identified by Gwynn.

On the tail end of the “General Curriculum” stage, Gwynn, among other scholars, contended that the fourth or next stage of curriculum development in the South was the “System-wide Curriculum Revision Movement, 1930-1942,” which then overlapped with Gwynn’s fifth stage of “Controlled Curriculum Experiments, 1934-1942.” These stages of curriculum development in the South were part of the national movements. They were profoundly influenced by “the concept of education as an essential process in democracy,” which utilized “the school as

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225 Ibid.

226 In 1936, at the Alabama State Teachers Association (ASTA) Annual Conference, departmental workshop sessions were held and led by O. H. Johnson and Genevieve Taylor from State Teachers College. “The 1936 Handbook of the Alabama State Teachers Association” (Montgomery: Alabama State Teachers Association through State Teachers College, Montgomery, 1936); Gray, 94.

227 As to the South’s secondary school curriculum development, Gwynn noted that “some outstanding experimentation [had] been carried on in the South in the area of secondary education.” Gwynn’s specific references to Black education included recognition of the fine work of the Slater Fund and General Education Board in creating industrial arts County Training Schools, and the importance of the “Southern Association Studies (White and Negro),” the significance of which Gwynn described as “great.” Gwynn, “Trends in Curriculum Development,” 125.
an agency for the achievement of social ideals.” Doak S. Campbell and Milton W. Carothers, noted in their 1946 study, “State-Wide Curriculum Revision and the Development of Workshops for Teachers,” that the concept of the school serving as an agent to realize social ideals was “by no means a new concept.” But the concept of the “relation of social ideals to social change” in an “application of the democratic process” was a progressive innovation and dominated the interest of educators during this period. The Black high school study was a dynamic example of this.


W. A. Robinson, reflecting on the work he and his colleague, H. C. Trenholm, had accomplished, stated, “Negro school men had to develop for themselves” and for Black high schools their own educational philosophies and curriculum direction. In doing so, Robinson asserted, they were able to “assist the white South in developing an adequate philosophy with regard to Negro education.” Particularly, Robinson declared, the recognition “as a necessary and

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229 Ibid. [emphasis mine]

230 Pfanner, “Thought of Negro Educators,” xiii.

231 Ibid.

232 Ibid.
constituent part of the state’s program of education, and justifiably entitled to adequate financial support.”

From the earliest demonstrations of a laboratory that provided a scholastic education that embraced the notion of learning by doing in its preparation for teachers, through the phenomenal expansion of Black high schools during a complex time in the nation’s history, Alabama State Teachers College Laboratory High School was a player in every Black education initiative. Taken together, these experiences, strategies, and successes worked to establish a highway to social uplift. State Teachers College Laboratory High School, Montgomery, Alabama, serves as an example of the growth and influence of Black laboratory high schools and their power to effect change in secondary education for African Americans.

Here was evidence of Black secondary schools’ sophisticated engagement in progressive methods of curriculum and teaching. These schools were expected to become centers of influence for African American education throughout the South, and they delivered. What is more astounding is that these educators made these great strides in advancing secondary education for African Americans during the most economically troubling times and under the draconian regime of segregation and White supremacy. This evidence has been largely ignored in historical accounts for decades. History after history has portrayed Black secondary education during this period as sorely wanting. It begs the question, if the documented achievements of these students, teachers, administrators, and laboratory schools had been highlighted and celebrated in the scholarly journals (Black and White), how might that have altered the perception and direction of Black education in the decades that followed?

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BEGINNINGS:
STATE COLLEGE LABORATORY HIGH SCHOOL,
INFLUENTIAL LEADERSHIP

Chapter IV
HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF ALABAMA STATE COLLEGE
AND LABORATORY HIGH SCHOOL

“A University for Colored People”:
Seeds of Inspiration and Effective Administration

In 1867, nestled in the Black Belt of Alabama, Lincoln Normal School in Perry County welcomed its first 113 students to the promise of teacher education for newly freed African Americans. Over the next ten decades, this pioneering Black educational facility persevered. Buffeted by legislation, surviving White racism, relocation, and experiencing seven name changes, it emerged in 1969 as the Alabama State University.¹

This study is concerned with the development and influence of the Alabama State College Laboratory School, 1920 to 1962. However, it is impossible to understand the laboratory school without first having a sense of the history of the institution in which it was born. This HBCU, the first state-supported Black college in the United States, had the good fortune of being led by

talented presidents, each of whom demonstrated acumen and vision within an oppressive environment. Chapters IV and V examine the historical origins of the college through the experiences of four of the institution’s presidents:

(1) William Burns Paterson (1878 to 1915)
(2) John William Beverly (1915 to 1920)
(3) George Washington Trenholm (1920 to 1925)
(4) Harper Councill Trenholm (1925 to 1962)

William Burns Paterson is considered the founder of the college; John William Beverly, an alumnus of the Normal School, first Black principal of the “model” school and first Black president of the institution; and George Washington Trenholm, whose progressive ideas brought the notion of a “laboratory” school to the college.2 The contributions and influence of the institution’s fifth president, Harper Councill Trenholm (1925 to 1962), are discussed in Chapter V.3 As remarkable as Paterson’s, Beverly’s, and the senior Trenholm’s contributions were, H. C. Trenholm “was even more successful than his predecessors.”4 From his first year at the helm of the all-Black college, H. C. Trenholm strategically leveraged the institution’s excellent high school to advance African American education in Alabama.

Over an eighty-year period, these four leaders exhibited tireless dedication, intelligence, courage, and progressive approaches to building an institution that was hailed as the most influential state teaching institution for African Americans in the nation.5

2 Founder’s Day (Montgomery: Alabama State University, 1988), 2, 4.

3 Although William B. Paterson is considered the “founder” of the college, the institution’s first president was George N. Card, 1867-1868, followed by William B. Paterson, 1878-1915; then John W. Beverly, 1915-1920; George W. Trenholm, 1920-1925; and H. Councill Trenholm, 1925-1962.


5 As early as 1926, State Normal School was noted as “the largest extension division offering direct class-center instruction, promoted by any institution for Negroes in the United States.” See The State Normal Courier-Journal 4, no. 9 (July 23, 1926), 2. The school remained dedicated to the summer school program, providing flexible
the college’s development, the high school was the heart of the institution and remained so as a “laboratory” high school through the middle of the twentieth century. Yet, why have examples of such schools not been included in our analyses of African American schooling during this period? In order to begin to understand why, as well as to appreciate the depth of accomplishment of these leaders and the tradition and ultimate educational achievement of Lab High, it is useful to have a sense of the local historical context of the school’s growth, the challenges it faced, and its successes.

To illuminate the history of Alabama State College and the central role of its high school is to confront the extremely limited historical analysis that presents evidence of “high caliber” schooling for African Americans during this period. To date, historical accounts of this educational institution have been incomplete, especially for the first trimester of the twentieth century, which is the primary focus of Chapter IV and into Chapter V. This historical overview of the early development of this laboratory high school will begin to reveal the scope of influence that schools associated with Black colleges and universities, such as Alabama State College Laboratory High School, had on Black education, regionally and nationally.

The origins of Alabama State University can be traced back to the years following the Civil War and to aspirations of nine African American men who held “positions of political influence.” Led by Alexander H. Curtis, these men sought the support of the American Missionary Association (AMA) and the Freedmen’s Bureau to open a school for Black citizens. All of these men were registered voters, and two had earned elected positions as delegates to the options for working teachers to earn degrees and certification. By 1931, State Teachers College was “the largest summer school for colored teachers in America.”

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6 “High caliber” was used by various authorities to describe the high school’s academic program, including its catalogues. “Catalogue of The Faculty and Students for 1921-1922 and Announcement of Courses for 1922-1923,” 47.


8 Curtiss bought his own freedom before the war.
House of Representatives of the State Legislature for sessions occurring during Alabama’s era of Reconstruction.  

Alexander H. Curtis, a “mulatto merchant barber from Marion,” was born a slave in 1829 and “bought his freedom in 1859.” Curtis was elected “senator from the twenty-second district for the Sessions 1872, 1873, 1874-75, 1875-76, 1876-77 and was a member of the House for the session of 1871-72.” He eventually became the most influential black politician in Perry County.  

David Harris, a merchant, served as “assistant town marshal in 1870.” Thomas Lee was among the first African American “delegates to the 1868 State Convention. James Childs was a leatherworker and shoemaker who purchased his own freedom, and ultimately became pastor of the Marion Negro Baptist Church. John Freeman was an African American registered voter from Perry County. Thomas Speed, an African American blacksmith and businessman, ran for Republican office in 1873 but was defeated. Nicholas Dale was an African American

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9 Watkins, *ASU History*, 3, 274; “The 1867 Voter Registration List, Perry County,” Civil Archives Division, Alabama Department of Archives and History, hereafter referred to as “ADAH”; U. S. Census of 1870; *Journal of the State Board of Education*, 21 November 1871, 72; See Watkins, *ASU History*, for more detailed discussion of this early history, “Lewis and Curtis were delegates to the 1875 Constitutional Convention,” 274.


12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., *Journal of the State Board of Education*, 21 November 1871, 7; Also see English, “Civil War and Civil Beings,” 214.

14 Alabama 1867 Voter Registration Records Data Base, Book 1,100, ADAH.

15 U. S. Census of 1870; Also see English, “Civil War and Civil Beings,” 474; Watkins, *ASU History*, 3.
carpenter. Joey Pinch and Nathan Levert were recorded by historians as being among the nine, but not included in the 1870 Census or 1867 Registration Records.\textsuperscript{16}

In response to the appeal for opening a normal school, the AMA sent a White teacher, Thomas Steward, to investigate. Steward affirmed the need and interest for a freedom school and, as a teacher from the AMA, began to hold classes in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The Freedmen’s Bureau also agreed to support the school, “provided the Negroes raised $500 and purchased land.”\textsuperscript{17} The freed people of Perry County harnessed the enthusiasm for creating a “college symbolizing man’s highest conviction and belief in the equal endowment of all of the Sons of God with the highest mental qualities,” and they succeeded in raising the necessary financial support, demonstrating what historian V. P. Franklin identified as collective cultural capital.\textsuperscript{18} On July 18, 1867, the nine men, representing “an articulate Negro voting constituency,” demanding an “equal, though separate, institution,” formed the school’s first board of trustees and “filed papers with the Probate Judge of Perry County, incorporating ‘The Lincoln School of Marion.’”\textsuperscript{19} The declaration stated, “The true intent and meaning of this declaration being, that although we, for purposes of convenience, associate ourselves into a corporation ... every colored man and child in Marion is equally interested in the objects of our association ... we expect to obtain the property which we shall acquire from them principally, and for their benefit.”\textsuperscript{20} Thanks to the combined support of AMA, the Freedmen’s Bureau, and the Black

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., 3; Alabama 1867 Registration Records Data Base, ADAH.

\textsuperscript{18}Bond, “Evolution and Present Status,” 224; Franklin and Savage, \textit{Cultural Capital}.

\textsuperscript{19}Historians have presumed that the selection of the name “Lincoln” for the normal school was most likely a tribute to Abraham Lincoln’s leadership in gaining freedom for the nation’s African American citizens. Watkins, \textit{ASU History}, 3; English, “Civil War and Civil Beings,” 263; Bond, “Evolution and Present Status,” 228.

community, Steward had sufficient financial and staff support to open the school. He was joined by two White female teachers, and within four months classes officially began.

Invested in his new community and interested in the future of Lincoln School, Thomas Steward engaged in local politics while continuing to teach at Lincoln; and within a year he was elected to a state senate seat representing Perry County. However, severe funding challenges dogged the school. By 1868, the founding Black trustees lost control and acquiesced to signing a ten-year agreement to lease the school to the AMA. Lincoln School was designated a “normal school,” among the ten (White and Black) schools “authorized” by the Alabama State Board of Education. Although still during the somewhat African American-friendly era of Reconstruction, it proved a turbulent time for Steward and the life of the school.

Reflective of the period, the Lincoln School was affected by the clashing values of some White Southerners. The school had impassioned supporters of both races, as well as vehement White detractors. Initially, Lincoln Normal School enjoyed public support. Within a few years of operation, the superintendent of education for Perry County, Joseph Hodgson, noted the great promise of the Lincoln Normal School. Praising its mission to prepare teachers, Hodgson stated that Lincoln was doing much to address the “great deficiency of competent teachers … especially for our colored schools.” Senator Steward, also newly appointed to serve as Commissioner of

\[\text{21} \quad \text{The act read: “Be it enacted by the board of education of Education of the State Board of Education … That the various associations and aid societies shall continue to select and send to the State competent teachers, and pay for their portion to and from their respective fields of labor that the state shall pay for the teachers thus furnished from the educational fund.” “An Act to Secure Co-operation with the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, and the Several Aid Societies,” in Alabama Department of Education, Acts Providing for the Organization, Supervision, and Maintenance of the Free Public Schools of the State of Alabama, Passed at the Session Commencing July 23d, 1868 (Montgomery, Ala.: John G. Stokes, 1868), 3.}\]

\[\text{22} \quad \text{Bertis English argued that although the “Post-bellum period was particularly challenging for black Alabamians,” Perry County was different. For a close examination of the politics during the era of Reconstruction and “Redemption,” 1860 to 1875, and its effect on African Americans, see English, “Civil War and Civil Beings,” iv.}\]

\[\text{23} \quad \text{Report of Joseph Hodgson to the State Board of Education, 30 September 1871.}\]
Education for Alabama, pushed a bill through that levied a property tax of one-half of one percent to support public education, which also helped Lincoln Normal School.\textsuperscript{24}

While successful passage of the bill signaled public support, there were a number of zealous opponents, especially when it came to supporting education for African Americans. “Whites were furious” with the tax for education and coordinated an attack that successfully repealed Steward’s act by 1871.\textsuperscript{25} Steward, a White man originally from Ohio, had to resort to bringing a rifle with him because the “Klansmen were becoming very bold.”\textsuperscript{26} He feared that “bloody scenes” were imminent.\textsuperscript{27} During this time, student enrollment at Lincoln Normal dropped to eighty-six from an opening enrollment of 113 in 1867.

During this time, Peyton Finley of Montgomery, Alabama, was the only African American member on the State Board of Education. Carrying the mission of Alabama’s African Americans to create higher education institutions, he introduced an “Act to establish a university for the education of colored students in the State of Alabama.”\textsuperscript{28} The board did not support Finley’s first proposal for a university, but Finley persisted, and in December 1871, the board approved it, recommending to Alabama’s legislature a resolution for appropriations for a “colored university.”\textsuperscript{29} This was a hopeful time for Alabama’s African Americans, especially Curtis and

\textsuperscript{24} Acts of the General Assembly of Alabama, 1869-1870 (Montgomery, Ala.: W. W. Screws, 1870), 120-121; Elias Dunkin v. Mayor, Council Town of Marion, James H. Graham, and George M. Brown, Perry County Circuit Court Case Files, 1860-1879, LG5403, ADAH.

\textsuperscript{25} Elias Dunkin v. Mayor, Council Town of Marion, James H. Graham, and George W. Brown, 28 May 1871, Perry County Chancery Court Trial Docket, 1869-1872, LG 4652, ADAH; Also see Watkins, ASU History, 7.

\textsuperscript{26} English, “Civil War and Civil Beings,” 186.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.; T. C. Steward to E. M. Cravath, 8 February 1871, American Missionary Association Papers, Dillard University, New Orleans, La.

\textsuperscript{28} Bond, Education in Alabama, 107.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 108-109; 1869-1871 Board of Education Minutes, SG 23724, 291, 292, ADAH.
his fellow trustees, who had worked toward this positive outcome under extremely trying circumstances for years.

Yet, the journey continued to be a stormy one. Steward, a vocal and influential advocate for Black education, lost favor with the state’s politicians and was dismissed as principal of Lincoln Normal School in October 1872, as was its entire faculty. The state board’s Commission appointed George N. Card as the new principal. Card, regarded as “a teacher by profession and practice,” was also known to have “neither interest nor part in political contests or controversies.” Financial difficulties also plagued the school. Even so, within a year, on December 6, 1873, Alabama’s legislature finally passed a bill establishing the “State Normal School and University for the Education of Colored Teachers and Students,” on the condition that the school be placed under the control of the state. Dealing with constant financial desperation, Card agreed. While still under Republican state control, the Alabama State Board of Education “appointed a board of commissioners to oversee the school.”

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30 There is no definitive reason why Steward and his teachers were dismissed other than Steward’s trail of political contention. Republican Thomas Steward had well-ensconced himself in Marion and Perry County politics. Democrats were troubled by Steward’s ability to carry the majority Black vote. Steward was called a “Negro equality carpetbag Radical of the very worst type,” and the Marion Commonwealth referred to Steward and his White colleagues, John T. Harris and Joseph Speed as “the immortal trio, Satan, Sin and Death.” While an outspoken advocate for Black education, he and African American trustee and politician Curtis publicly bickered. (Curtis, among the most powerful Black politicians, believed that Lincoln Normal School should be under Black control.) See English, “Civil War and Civil Beings,” 267, 276, 283, 301, 50, 356.

31 Commonwealth, 26 January 1872.


33 Ibid. The three-member commission consisted of Alexander H. Curtis, among the original African American founders of the school; J. T. Harris, Perry County Republican and tax collector; and Democrat, Porter King, a successful Perry County businessman and landowner, who sold his land to be used for the new school site. Black and White embers of the community raised $225 to purchase land, $50 of which was “donated” by Porter King. But according to historian Bertis English, King had simply reduced the price of his land by $50. For further discussion of the political climate of the period, see English, “Civil War and Civil Beings,” 262.
It was a difficult start for the State Normal School. The “university’s” enrollment dropped to fifty-five under the direction of one teacher, George Card. In the beginning, courses were offered at the elementary and “intermediate” level. As the students progressed, additional courses were added in mathematics, geography, writing, spelling, reading, algebra, history, philosophy, natural philosophy, and composition.\textsuperscript{34} In an 1877 listing of universities in Alabama, the State Normal School and University for Colored Teachers and Students was included as a “university,” comparable to other institutions of the period that were categorized as “universities.”\textsuperscript{35} The commissioners wrote to the State Board of Education, reporting of the successful advancement of its students and calling for more adequate support from the state.

The fact can no longer be avoided nor ignored, that if the colored people of the State have their just educational rights, they must have a university of higher instruction. Twenty students from the school have taught in public and private schools with the best of success. We desire that our school shall be second to no other in the State, and we have no doubts, if you can only give us the proper support.\textsuperscript{36}

On December 15, 1873, the Alabama State Board of Education officially sanctioned the creation of the first state-supported institution for the training of African American teachers.\textsuperscript{37} The act included language that demonstrated the state’s support for the education of African Americans in a manner equal to that provided its White citizens: “it being the intent and purpose of this Act to provide for the liberal education of the colored race in the same manner as is

\textsuperscript{34} Journal of the Alabama State Board of Education, 17 October 1873, 74-75; Also see Alabama Board of Education Meeting Minutes, 127-128.

\textsuperscript{35} T. Cotesworth Pinckney letter to John M. McKleroy, 7 December 1877, Education Correspondence, 1875-1878, SG 16977m ADAH.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.

already provided for the education of the white race in universities and colleges.” State funding of $2,000 was apportioned for the “State Normal School and University for the Education of Colored Teachers and Students.” The appropriation was “less than one-tenth of the $24,000 that the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa received in 1874.” Still, it was a celebratory time, as education for Alabama’s African Americans took a step forward.

Suffering from ill health, George Card retired in 1878. The state appointed a White educator to replace him in the role as president, William Burns Paterson. Paterson was an independent thinker, not having been an agent for the AMA or educated in the North. Born in Scotland, he emigrated to Alabama with a dream to make a name for himself. In short order, he turned to education and opened a school for African Americans in Greensboro, Alabama, which he successfully built and defended from White Klansman. The offer to take the helm of the new State Normal School and University for Colored Teachers was a challenge filled with tremendous potential.

Carrying with him a contingent of faithful students, and having the support of both the Black and White communities, he expanded enrollments and procured new land and buildings.


40 With the end of Reconstruction, some White southerners opposed education for African Americans and increased intimidation efforts to impede such efforts. Paterson’s steadfastness and courage to defend his school for American Americans from White Klansmen became known throughout the area, leading to his selection for the new “colored peoples’ university.” See Sherer, Subordination or Liberation, 23, 159; Judge Walter B. Jones, “A Few Personal Recollections of William Burns Paterson,” in “Off the Bench,” Montgomery Advertiser, 19 December 1955.

By the 1880-1881 school-year, students from twenty counties throughout Alabama comprised the blossoming enrollment of 222. African American enthusiasm for teacher education continued, and student enrollment grew to 303 by 1883-84.

Paterson’s correspondence revealed his firm commitment to providing a liberal arts curriculum for all students. Although years away from leading an institution of higher education, that was his goal, and to his way of thinking, the education that was required of university students was a classical education. He refused to use the limited state funds for industrial education. Enrollment reached four hundred for the 1884-1885 academic year, with a staff of nine White teachers and one African American. Paterson appealed to the state for “sufficient support” to achieve the objective of making the school a university, but additional funding was not forthcoming. He continued to manage the school with supplemental contributions from the African American community and philanthropic organizations.

By 1885, Paterson organized a “model” school, intended to provide practice teaching for the senior students. Educating Black teachers in the liberal arts, Paterson reasoned, was the most meaningful way to make a difference, and he dedicated his energy to creating a comprehensive teacher education program. Countering Paterson’s lack of interest in manual or industrial arts, “J. L. M. Curry, of the Peabody Fund, and Atticus G. Haywood of the John F. Slater Fund, furnished the money” to fund a carpentry shop for boys and a sewing class for girls, which were incorporated into the course offerings at the State Normal School and University.42 While Paterson accepted their contribution, incorporating these manual arts classes into the course offerings at State Normal School and University, he reaffirmed to the community and the school board that the institution’s purpose was to provide higher learning in the liberal arts.

The school’s achievements were not only recognized but even celebrated by some White Southerners. In 1886, newspaper articles praised the institution, describing it as “an ornament of the state,” “a blessing to the colored race,” and “one of the largest normal colleges in the South

42 Watkins, ASU History, 18.
for the education of the colored race.” In September 1886, the (White) school treasurer, John Moore, wrote to the state requesting more financial support in order to bring the school up to the promised “university” status that was legislated:

Again, I desire to call attention to the fact that this institution was founded mainly for higher education of colored young men and women in the State. It was intended, as stated in the charter, to give them advantages as the white’s have in their schools and colleges. So far it has been so conducted as to supply the colored race with just such training as was needed.... It is to be hoped that the State of Alabama will fulfill the pledge it has already made to establish a university department on a liberal basis, so that its colored citizens may be able to receive here a liberal education.... There is much to be done yet to adapt this school to the wants of its patrons.

Once again, however, other Whites were aghast at the thought of a “university”-educated African American. While celebrated advancements in Black education had been achieved, White backlash against the new university for Black Alabamians was harsh and organized, effectively truncating Black’s aspirations for their university.

By December 1886, a growing number of influential White citizens grew more truculent, asserting their distaste for the Black university in Marion. Racial tensions escalated, and the White press carried vituperous charges against the State Normal School’s students over a clash between State Normal and White students from Howard College. Paterson wrote to Booker T. Washington, appealing to him for support.

Twenty to thirty of the Howard Cadets surrounded one of our [State Normal] students, because he would not get off the sidewalk to let them pass. They clubbed him and would have killed him but for his agility and bravery. He defended himself

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43 Marion Standard, 9 June 1886; Marion Standard, 2 June 1886.


45 Marion was also home to two well-regarded White Baptist schools, Howard and Judson Colleges. The incident involved students from Howard and was quite controversial. Different versions of the story flew throughout the community, including articles in the local press, accompanied by efforts toward further retaliation and intimidation.
heroically and no one knowing the truth can blame him.... This question of self-
defence must be settled and the sooner the better.... Remember me kindly.\textsuperscript{46}

With the additional evidence from this incident of student disharmony, White agitation culminated with White politicians proposing a bill that called for an end to the African American university. The language further stated that if the state decided to allow the institution to continue, “Alabama Colored People’s University” must be removed from Marion and relocated in a different county.\textsuperscript{47} Also during this time of unrest, “suspicious” fires destroyed the State Normal School’s main buildings.\textsuperscript{48}

Relocating the university to begin anew would be a serious blow and could possibly destroy the institution. Other influential White citizens wrote to Governor Thomas Seay attesting to the Black students’ “orderly” behavior.\textsuperscript{49} The mayor of Marion, James H. Graham, confirmed that “no Negro student had been before him for violating an ordinance.”\textsuperscript{50} John H. Chapman, a White Marion lawyer and Democrat, wrote to Seay expressing his concern: “I consider its [State Normal School and University for Colored Teachers and Students] removal a great hardship upon our colored citizens and especially upon those of them who have purchased property near it, so as to be able to educate their children.”\textsuperscript{51} Despite pleas by Black and some White citizens to


\textsuperscript{47} Perry County representative, C. D. Hogue proposed a bill, February 9, 1887. House Bill 902, Alabama Legislature, 9 February 1887.

\textsuperscript{48} For a more detailed discussion of the year of unrest, see Watkins, \textit{ASU History}, 19-23; Sherer, \textit{Subordination or Liberation}, 10, 26; Sherer, \textit{Black Education in Alabama}. For a detailed examination of Perry County politics and the incidents leading to the required relocation of State Normal School, see English, “Civil Wars and Civil Beings,” 6476-647.

\textsuperscript{49} James H. Graham to Thomas Seay, n.d., \textit{Governors Papers}, A-L, January-March, 1887, ADAH.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{51} John H. Chapman to Thomas Seay, 14 February 1887, \textit{Governors Papers}, A-L, January-March, 1887, ADAH.
allow the university to remain in Marion, it was required to leave Perry County. And as mandated by an amendment to the bill, it could “not be located in any community without the consent of the citizens of the said community.” On February 28, 1887, Governor Seay signed the bill into law.

While William Paterson was permitted to remain as president of the homeless institution, Governor Seay ruled that a new board of trustees be appointed. Seay received correspondence from various parties, offering opinions as to who would best serve the institution as a trustee. Among them was Flemming Law, who wrote to Seay encouraging a “Whites only” board of trustees. He argued that “it was doubtful” that any Black man could offer the school any advantage. In fact, Law explained, it was the White Southerner that would be the best judge of the “character and wants of the Negro in mental or educational needs.” He further assured the governor that the “intelligent portion of the Negroes ... would have more confidence in the judgment and ability of whites than of their own color.” Leadership in the African American community soon recognized that their limited control was slipping away.

Most importantly, Alabama’s General Assembly remained faithful to its 1873 commitment to support a “University for Colored People.” It appropriated $10,000 for erection of a building and $7,500 annually to support the creation and life of the university. The new board of trustees was to consist of eight members, appointed by Seay. The governor apparently agreed with Flemming Law’s advice and decided not to allow any of the founding trustees, nor any African American, to remain on the board.

52 Sherer, Subordination or Liberation, 26.
53 Senator R. H. Sterret, of Jefferson County proposed the amendment, which, according to Watkins’ records, “passed without a dissenting vote.” See Watkins, ASU History, 23.
54 Flemming Law to Thomas Seay, 28 May 1887, Official Governor’s Papers, SG 8415, ADAH.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
Americans, to serve on the board of trustees of the “University for Colored People.” An all-White board of trustees, headed by the Governor, would serve as the ultimate authority and decision maker for issues of finance, buildings and grounds, and faculty and staff, including its officers. The 1887 act read:

Sec. 1. Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Alabama, That there is hereby created and established a university for the education of the colored people of Alabama, to be called “The Alabama Colored People’s University.”

Sec. 2. The Governor shall appoint eight trustees.... The Superintendent of Education shall be a member of said board of trustees, and the Governor shall be president thereof.

Section 3. That said board of trustees shall ... select a suitable place for said university, having regard to healthfulness, accessibility, and the value of any land or buildings that may be offered for such university; Provided, that no place shall be selected against the wishes of the people of said place....

Section 4. The trustees shall have full power and authority to elect a faculty and such officers and agents as they deem necessary to carry on the university, and shall have authority to discharge such faculty, or any member thereof, or any officer or agent whenever they see fit to do so ... and to fix their compensation, and generally govern and control said faculty and the university ...

Section 7. For the purpose of buying the necessary land or building ... there is hereby appropriated to the colored race, four thousand dollars in October, 1887, four thousand in October, 1888, and two thousand in October, 1889, which shall be paid out on the order of the Governor, or as it is actually needed, and no faster.

Section 10. For support or maintenance of said university, there is hereby set apart and appropriated of the school fund for the education of the colored race, the sum of seven thousand five hundred dollars annually, to be paid to the treasurer of the said board of trustees in equal installments ... after the university is ready for receiving and teaching students, and not before.

57 There is personal correspondence which suggest that Paterson, too, recommended only White individuals to serve on the new board of trustees. See J. L. H. Watkins to Booker T. Washington, 14 May 1887, in Harlan, Washington Papers, 351-52.

Not surprisingly, the Black community was disturbed that no African American was appointed to serve as a trustee; however, equally unsurprising, African Americans continued their fervent support of the institution, critical to keeping the school alive. What was left for Paterson and his staff to do was find a home for the new university, one that the broader community would “consent to” and the new board of trustees would approve.

The two locations considered most viable were Birmingham and Montgomery. John William Beverly, a teacher at the institution and William Paterson’s right-hand man, conducted research trips on behalf of Paterson to determine which location might be most suitable. Both locations had enthusiastic supporters and strong detractors. Beverly’s job was primarily to determine the level of interest of the African American community to help support a Black university, and whether the White community was receptive. Beverly reported that Montgomery seemed the best choice, as members of the Black community had already identified the land for the new university.

In May 1887, an editorial in the Weekly Advertiser, Montgomery’s main newspaper, claimed that “the people of Montgomery” were not only eager to “give the colored people an equal chance in education,” but to extend an “all favorable” welcome and “all the encouragement and assistance in their power.”

Establishing the school in Montgomery would meet the mandates of the act. It removed the institution from Perry County to a location in which those in the local community were “in agreement” to accept it. This would situate the school between Marion and Tuskegee.

However, Tuskegee Normal School for Colored Teachers, founded in 1881, was only forty miles farther east, which did not sit well with its principal, Booker T. Washington. Emphasizing manual arts and practical education in construction, domestic work, and agriculture, Washington had been successful in attracting contributions from Northern philanthropists to develop his school. Fearing that a State Normal School in Montgomery would threaten state support for his

59 Montgomery Daily Advertiser, May 3, 1887.
school, the wily Washington exerted considerable effort to keep the new teacher education institution from settling in Montgomery. Washington hired White legal counsel, sent his staff to various meetings, and directed his faculty to appear before the state commission in an effort to stop the relocation to Montgomery.  

In addition, there was growing opposition by some in the White community, who asserted that a “university” for African Americans would be a threat to “white supremacy.” It had long been believed in Alabama that an educated African American would subsequently forget his place in Southern society. A scurrilous campaign again played out in the local newspapers, echoing a familiar refrain. Articles appeared in area papers decrying the plan to establish a university to educate African Americans. “As citizens of Montgomery,” the Daily Register editorial in August 1887 read, “We depreciate any further efforts being made to introduce any such ‘educated’ Romeos in our midst.”

After months of impassioned debate and lobbying by Black and White citizens, a decision was reached. The new White board of trustees selected Montgomery with the stipulation that the African American community raise $5,000 for its support and provide land for its use. Once again, the self-reliant and determined African American community enthusiastically did so, demonstrating collective cultural capital. By the fall of 1887, the school was moved about eighty miles east to Montgomery. Upon hearing the final decision, Booker T. Washington indicated that he would “waste no time worrying over it, but throw [his] energy toward making Tuskegee

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60 In correspondence over several months, Booker T. Washington communicated his objection to the school being relocated to Montgomery and directed and responded to efforts to lobby against Montgomery being selected. See B.T. Washington to Warren Logan, 2 February 1887: “My object is to prevent the Marion school from being located here [in Montgomery],” in Harlan, Washington Papers, 331; Ibid., 325, 329, 333, 343-44, 350, 351, 376. For a detailed discussion of Washington’s role, see Sherer, Subordination or Liberation, 23-32.

61 Mobile Daily Register, 18 August 1887.
Normal School all the better institution." However, a small group of White men continued to protest vociferously. To quiet the White uproar, Governor Seay issued a public statement declaring that the decision could not be undone.

Undaunted, two White citizens, William Elsberry and Alexander Troy, filed suit against the state, arguing that the plan for such a university to educate African Americans beyond primary schooling “would lead to social equality and the breakdown of white supremacy.” The suit also alleged that it violated the 1887 Act, which stated “that no place shall be selected against the wishes of the people of the said place.” In February of 1988, the Alabama Supreme Court ruled in *Elsberry v. Seay* in favor of the plaintiffs.

The “Alabama University for the colored people,” as established by the act approved February 27th, 1887 (Sess. Acts 1886-7, p. 198), being under the exclusive control and management of a board of trustees ... and not subject to the supervision of the State superintendent of education ... cannot be regarded as one of these public schools; and the sums appropriated by said act for the purchase of lands, the erection of buildings, and the annual support and maintenance of the University, being “set apart and appropriated from the school fund for the education of the colored people,” which is an unauthorized perversion of the funds from their only proper use, --such appropriations are unconstitutional and void; and the other parts of the enactment being incapable of operation, without the aid of these unconstitutional provisions, the entire act is void.

The complaint from Elsberry and Troy that claimed a violation of the 1887 Act on the grounds that not all of the community consented to a “University for Colored People,” and their associated argument that educating African Americans at a university level would threaten White


64 Ibid.

supremacy in the South, were not directly addressed in the ruling. The Court, having based its decision on the unconstitutionality of misappropriated government funds, stated that it “render[ed] unnecessary a statement of the other grounds of objection set out in the bill.”

The ruling meant that the dream of building a “university” was deferred. The institution could keep its promised state funding only if it remained a “normal school,” not a university. Disappointed, the editorials in Black newspapers condemned the decision, asserting that it was intended to “defeat the Negro, to crush him out, to keep him in subjection.”

Paterson, Beverly, and the teaching staff, although resigned to establishing only a normal school, still held great aspirations for “higher education” course offerings in the classic liberal arts curriculum. In 1888, enrollment reached five hundred, and Paterson opened the new “Model School” in Montgomery for his advanced student teachers. The Model School was not only intended to serve as a practice teaching opportunity, but also provide a liberal arts curriculum to Montgomery’s children.

Finally, on February 20, 1889, the promised funds of $4,500 were approved by the General Assembly of Alabama with the stipulation that the new institution remain under the control of the state. By May, of the $5,000 required to be raised from the Black community, the state board accepted $3,300 from Montgomery’s African American community, the remaining $1,700 to follow shortly. The campus for the new “State Normal School for Colored Students” was six and one half acres of land located in the heart of Montgomery. The money and land represented “voluntary subscriptions by the colored people” of Montgomery and even “efforts of blacks outside of Montgomery” to raise the needed capital for the school.

66 Ibid.

67 Cleveland Gazette, 11 March 1888.

68 Watkins, ASU History, 33. This remained the case until 1937, although, the “laboratory school” accepted fewer students.

69 The local advisory board included ministers and businessmen, all of whom contributed. Sources from outside of the city, such as a grocer from Birmingham who donated four lots worth $3,000, and Black churches that
Now in Montgomery, Paterson had been president of the school for more than ten years and was credited with keeping it alive through the relocation and legal issues. Wasting no time, he held classes in Beulah Baptist Church while the new building was being constructed, and registration was held at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church. Upon receiving the news of the final decision and official appropriations, “scenes of the wildest happiness” broke out among the students and faculty at “Vale of Beulah.”70 Singing, prayers, and addresses turned into a holiday and celebration,” as construction got officially under way for the new buildings on the Montgomery campus. The jewel of the campus was the two-story building constructed in 1895, Tullibody Hall, named for Paterson’s home town in Scotland. It boasted fourteen classrooms, office, reception room, and a capacious auditorium, completed for $13,992.80.71

Paterson remained committed to a liberal arts curriculum in the face of the emphasis on industrial arts popular with the powerful White legislators, philanthropists, and the “Wizard of Tuskegee,” Booker T. Washington.72 With Tuskegee Institute looming large, forty miles away, Paterson’s insistence on building a scholastically focused normal school cost him popular support among “many Alabama whites, the General Education Board, and the Slater Fund.”73 He believed that successful leadership for African Americans required the same educational opportunities as those afforded to Whites.

70 Watkins, ASU History, 35.
71 Ibid.
73 Ibid., 36.
As president of a segregated Black institution, Paterson had encouraged other leaders of segregated institutions to work together to advance Black education. In 1882, he organized the Alabama State Teachers Association (ASTA), calling for Alabama’s teachers to attend a meeting in Selma, Alabama, for the purposes of advancing Black education and building a professional support organization for the state’s teachers. The ASTA constitution of 1882 set up its articles of organization, naming itself the Alabama State Teachers Association and electing William Paterson as its first president. A principal benefit of the organization was sharing educational experiences from different regions, which also invited mutual sharing of solutions to educational challenges. ASTA members realized that as teachers, they were empowered to guide the direction of African Americans.

At the association’s annual meeting in 1888, Reverend G. M. Elliott addressed the membership. “Teachers, you are the shapers of thought and the molders of sentiment,” ASTA’s second president preached to the group of educators.74 “Not of this age and this generation alone,” he declared, “but of ages and generations to come. You are making history by those you teach.”75 Adding clarity to his point of the power Alabama’s African American teachers wielded in the classrooms across the state, Elliott stated, “You are the few that are molding the masses.”76 The power to influence students’ lives as a teacher was strengthened by the state’s professional teachers’ association. By the turn of the century, that power was strengthened further by the founding of a national Black teachers’ association.

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75 Ibid.

76 Ibid.
In 1903, Professor J. R. E. Lee, a professor in the “academic department” of Tuskegee Institute, “issued a call for the founding of a National Organization of Colored Teachers.” According to the organization’s historian, Thelma Perry, there is no record of the charter members, but it is a “virtual certainty” that Booker T. Washington had advised Lee to initiate the organization.

There is also evidence that William Paterson was among the early members, having survived a disquieting attack ten years earlier, leveled by W. Hooper Councill and focusing on Paterson’s right as a White man to lead a normal school “for colored students.” Paterson had been wounded and angry. He had dedicated more than ten years to State Normal School, taking it from a skeleton of an institution in 1878 to the vibrant Normal School with more than five hundred students by 1888. Councill’s real motive in the public attack against Paterson was to eliminate State Normal School as a candidate for the Morrill 1890 Act appropriations, which designated funds specifically for “Negro” institutions. Councill succeeded. The precious $25,000 in Morrill Act 1890 funding went to Alabama Normal and Mechanical Institute in Huntsville, and Paterson did not receive any.

While Paterson was disappointed that his school was deemed ineligible for the desperately needed funds, he retained the liberal arts course of study, responding to the desires of the African American community and, in Paterson’s view, offering a curriculum that better prepared his

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77 Perry, History of ATA, 45.

78 Ibid. The notion of Black teachers working together to effect change, as a “molder of effective sentiment for Negro education,” was a consistent theme in both the Alabama Teacher’s Association and the National Association of Colored Schools. See The State Normal Courier-Journal 4, no. 9 (July 23, 1926), 1.


80 Sherer, 26-27.

students for future careers as educators, over the narrow agricultural and industrial arts program. \(^{82}\) “The stronger the opposition [to Black education] became, the more steadfast and determined the old Scotsman was” to growing the Normal School. \(^{83}\)

Believing in preparing Black teachers in the same manner as White teachers, Paterson alienated the White power brokers and threatened those Black leaders who were tied to industrial education. However, at the same time, he was “influential in Negro education” in Alabama and enjoyed a “large and devoted following among the [Black and White] teachers of the State.” \(^{84}\) A General Education Board agent included in his report that while Paterson was not a “follower of industrialism,” which caused him to be unpopular with those at Tuskegee Institute, his State Normal School was “very popular in Montgomery [and] his students [came] from the best class of people.” \(^{85}\)

This is one of the first documented references to “class of people” who attended State Normal. Even in this early period, earning an education from the State Normal School represented a significant step up the social and educational ladder. Statistics from the U. S. Department of Education revealed that only 5.6 percent of the total population, ages 14 to 17, ...

\(^{82}\) The correspondence and public documents reveal a competition for the Morrill Act funds based on demonstration of teaching agricultural courses, which Paterson had avoided.

\(^{83}\) Judge Walter B. Jones, “A Few Personal Recollections of William Burns Paterson,” in “Off the Bench,” Montgomery Advertiser, 19 December 1955. Son of Thomas Goode Jones, one of the original trustees, Jones paid tribute to the friendship Paterson and his father had and how his father helped Paterson ward off “ruffians” who were set to “tar and feather” him for educating African Americans. The younger Jones was a member of the Alabama House of Representatives from 1919 to 1920 and became a circuit judge in the state. Judge Jones was active during the civil rights issues of the 1950s. Among his judgments was issuing a restraining order in 1956 that prevented the NAACP from operating in Alabama, after refusing to release a list of its Alabama members.

\(^{84}\) Report of GEB Agent, 1904, as cited in Watkins, ASU History, 43.

\(^{85}\) Ibid.
was enrolled in school during this period. This placed students of State Normal School in an exclusive category. Additionally, graduates were virtually guaranteed a teaching position upon finishing their program of study, which was highly valued in the African American community as an elite position. Paterson was well aware of the cachet that a certified teacher carried in the Black community. This professional distinction was enhanced by membership in the professional teachers’ association, which Paterson had founded.

Ironically, it was membership in the Alabama State Teachers’ Association that fueled the public disagreement between Alabama A & M president Councill and Paterson. Councill argued that Paterson’s participation in the Black teachers’ association contradicted the purpose of Black teacher solidarity, which infuriated Paterson. Paterson also faced a public charge that State Normal School for Colored Teachers employed White teachers and, hence, was trying to promote “social equality” in the state—a charge that spelled trouble when made in the “Cradle of the Confederacy.” Paterson walked a tightrope of racial tensions, trying to balance his goal to prepare classically trained teachers with his Black colleague emphasizing manual arts for Black students. Although Paterson was White, as a leader of a Black institution, his race was used against him. Paterson feared for the health of his normal school. He believed that there was room for both types of institutions. He corresponded with Booker T. Washington to explain his position.

Paterson made it clear that while he was “old enough to love peace,” he was not going to be bullied into leaving the institution that he had dreams to build. “If these gentlemen want some amusement,” Paterson warned, “they can have it. I am here on the ground, and know the situation.” Paterson also appealed to Washington’s influential position. “I want your friendship and good-will,” Paterson enjoined. He further expressed his sincere intentions, like Washington, 

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87 William B. Paterson to Booker T. Washington, 3 September 1897, in Watkins, ASU History, 41.
to improve the lives of African Americans through education when he wrote to Washington, “I want to see you prosper and am with you...” While Paterson and Washington were not considered good friends, they shared the goal of social uplift for African Americans through education and developed a collegial relationship. Washington counseled Paterson to maintain his membership with the National Association of Colored Teachers. By 1907, accommodations were made to recognize that not all members were Black, and thus it changed its name to the “National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools.”

Funding for Black public schools was a never-ending challenge. Even with generous support of the African American community of one thousand dollars for desks and students’ tuitions to the State Normal School, the limited funding from the state of only $8,500 and the meager support from the philanthropic organizations of $3,500 from the Slater Fund and $2,000 from the Peabody Fund made it extremely difficult for the school to grow.

In 1904, Tullibody Hall was destroyed by fire. Paterson kept the school running by crowding his students in the smaller buildings while new construction began on the new Tullibody Hall. This took a toll on Paterson’s progress in improving the level of education offered. A report by the General Education Board in 1906 stated that the “more intelligent men about the city” were “disappointed” because they found the courses to be lower than the “collegiate training” they anticipated. Nevertheless, they still sent their children there. Within a year, the building was completed and, as 1907 graduate F. Douglass Adair noted, “Our dear Alma Mater opened the fall of 1905 with President W. B. Paterson, a faculty of 23 or 24 teachers, and a student body of about three hundred.”

88 Ibid.
89 Watkins, ASU History, 42.
90 Report of GEB Agent, 1906.
91 Ibid.
92 Watkins, ASU History, 43.
Paterson was not reluctant to declare the state’s lack of financial support to the institution as he sought adequate funding. Consistent with the experiences of other HBCUs, financial support was supplemented by direct appeals to the Black community and contributions from the philanthropic organizations. For example, in an effort to acquire monies to build the school’s library, Paterson wrote to the GEB, stating, “The present State administration is the most unfriendly to Negro education since the war, and I find it impossible to get any help from the state.” In the 1911-1912 Normal School Catalogue, Paterson reported:

The [state] legislature of 1911 increased the appropriation to $15,000 per annum, gave $5,000 for improvements and repairs, and an additional $10,000 for an industrial building. Beginning with two teachers and a score of students, the school has shown substantial progress every year and during the past year over thirty teachers and 1100 students. During all this time the income from the state was entirely too small and acknowledgment is here made that the success of the institution has been due largely to financial assistance given by the Peabody and the Slater funds.

Paterson had successfully navigated the turbulence of relocation from Marion to Montgomery and solidly established the State Normal School in its new home. He had expanded the school from the small collection of fifty-five students to more than one thousand. Deservedly, he was heralded as the “founding” head of the school. From the first “Founder’s Day” celebration organized by Ms. Terrell’s sixth grade class in 1901, annual Founder’s Day celebrations continued faithfully throughout the school’s history. Judge Walter Jones, son of founding trustee Thomas Goode Jones, declared that Paterson was “admired and respected” by both Black and White Alabamians for his faithful commitment to African American education. Paterson, who

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94 State Normal Courier, 1924, as cited in Watkins, ASU History, 44.

95 Normal School for Colored Students 1911-12 Catalogue.

96 Judge Walter B. Jones, Montgomery Advertiser, ASU Archives.
served as president of the school for thirty-seven years, died on March 19, 1915. His protégé and alumnus of the school, John William Beverly, was named his successor.

African American President John William Beverly: Boldly Working within the Alabama Caste

As the first African American appointed president of the Normal School, Beverly faced the same problems with funding as Paterson, but with the added complication that Beverly was Black. As an African American leader operating in the former Confederacy, Beverly was not permitted to have a voice at board of education meetings. No African Americans were permitted to attend any meetings unless specifically invited to do so. Maintaining a respectful distance, Beverly led the development of his state-supported Normal School, while keeping closely attuned to the South’s entrenched caste system. It was a dual world that was constantly changing, highly complex, and requiring consummate skill to navigate.

John William Beverly was an enslaved four-year-old living in Hale County, Alabama when Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in January 1863, which freed all enslaved people in the rebelling states. Beverly was a bright young boy who was swept up in the celebration and the excitement over the possibilities of education during Reconstruction. He was eager to learn and became a student of William B. Paterson’s at Tullibody Academy in Greensboro, Alabama. 97 He followed Paterson to Lincoln Normal School and was among the first students to graduate from the “university division.” Having had the privilege of a liberal arts, college preparatory education, Beverly was accepted to Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, where he graduated in 1894 with a bachelor of philosophy degree.98


Upon graduation, Beverly returned to Alabama with a mission to educate his fellow Alabama citizens. His continued admiration of William Paterson and the promise of helping to cultivate the State Normal School and University for Colored Students and Teachers, Paterson brought him back to work as “Professor [of] higher mathematics and philosophy” and assistant principal.  

99 At the time of the state-mandated relocation, Beverly conducted the initial investigations into the prospective communities and ultimately worked alongside Paterson through the school’s relocation and construction in Montgomery. In addition to his teaching and assistant principal responsibilities, Beverly served as president of the Alabama State Teachers’ Association, 1899-1900, and as “state historian” for Alabama in 1902.  

100 He was also the “conductor and proprietor” for the “Alabama teachers correspondence school, 1902-03.”  

101 Beverly was a trailblazer. Having been born and raised in Alabama, he understood the South’s social customs, the White leadership’s expectations, and the Alabama State Board of Education’s practices. At the same time, he had proven through his own journey that he was also keenly aware of the power of education. Beverly was described as “a man of deep thought” who “considered well his plans before executing them.”  

102 Such a description helps to explain his bold actions as the president of Alabama’s Normal School for Colored Students.  

As the first African American liberal arts teacher at State Normal School, Beverly helped develop the school’s four-year high school, which was recognized by the 1917 U.S. Bureau of Education Negro Study as providing a rare four-year secondary liberal arts course of study. The 1917 study by Thomas Jesse Jones had recommended elimination of the Normal School’s elementary program; however, Beverly determined that maintaining the lower level courses

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100 Ibid.

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid.
would provide an education to those from the community who needed it, while also allowing him to prepare students for his advanced classes. Thus, Beverly encouraged the school’s elementary students to continue their education and enroll in the high school, and, ultimately, in the normal and collegiate courses.

Beverly was passionate about educating African Americans and sought to ignite their interest in national progressive curriculum trends. He “possessed exceptional talent as a writer” and authored many scholastic “pamphlets for distribution” to “those who [were] denied educational advantages.” In 1903, The Gulf State Historical Magazine noted Beverly’s recent publication of a book for use in the classroom, entitled Guide to the English Oration.

The author is a teacher in the State Normal School for [N]egroes, at Montgomery, Ala. He explains in his preface that the work grows out of a school room necessity, his experience being that neither students nor teachers of rhetoric have any well defined knowledge of what the oration is. The work consists of general principles, and an analysis of some of the finest specimens of oration in the English language.

Beverly also wrote complete texts for use in the classroom and was hailed for his published works, such as Every Day Mistakes in the English Language, “Practical Ethics for Children,” and History of Alabama, in addition to Guide to the English Oration.

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103 Horace Mann Bond speaks to this history when he wrote: “… it was not uncommon for a rough, almost illiterate, farm boy to come to one … of the ‘colleges’ in the South … and by the time of his graduation, [become] an educated man; a man at home in the manners, the literature, and a great deal of the general culture of his world.” See Bond, “Evolution and Present Status,” 234.

104 Richardson, ed., The National Cyclopedia of the Colored Race; also see Historical Catalogue of Brown University 1764-1904, 410.


By 1915, the school had a total of 31 teachers, two of whom were White. Beverly further developed the Model School, an important aspect of the teacher training program that was designed as a practice opportunity for the “senior” students and a place where the philosophy of “pedagogics” could be explored. From the school’s staff roster and program of study, it is evident that Beverly brought his Brown University training in “instruction in pedagogy,” “theory and practice of education,” and other coursework to bear on his curriculum development at the Normal School.

Beverly worked with the Alabama State Superintendent of Education, Sprigth Dowell, to make sure the Normal School’s graduates received state teacher certifications. In correspondence with Dowell, Beverly praised the state superintendent for his support of the school and “inspired” work in helping the students stay in school to earn the “privilege of certification.” State recognition of teacher certification for the Normal School’s graduates affirmed outside authorities’ observations of the quality of its liberal arts education. In a letter to Dowell, Beverly noted that awarding state teacher certification to the deserving graduates who finished their four-year course program would be “of inestimable value to our school and the cause of education in Alabama.” The ability to earn a state-awarded “First Class certificate rank” was considered a high distinction for demonstrated achievement.

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107 The study of the philosophy of “pedagogics” became increasingly prevalent during the progressive era. Among the studies for use by educators were Wilhelm Rein, *Outlines of Pedagogics* (Syracuse, N.Y.: C. W. Bardeen, 1893) and Francis W. Parker, *Talks on Pedagogics: An Outline of the Theory of Concentration* (New York: E.L. Kellogg, 1894). Also see John Swett’s 1900 study, *American Public Schools History and Pedagogics* (New York: American Book Company, 1900), 4. Scholar Swett stated that in his study he “made free use of quotations from the latest writings of American educational leaders in order to show the drift of modern pedagogical and psychological thought.”


110 W. T. B. Williams, “State Normal School”; Pinckney to McKleroy

111 Ibid.
Only a few years earlier, state officials were struggling over how to implement compulsory school attendance given the large population of African Americans in the Black Belt counties. The Montgomery superintendent in 1908 had stated, “I do not believe that compulsory education would suit any black belt county, unless we could by some means get around the Negro question.”\textsuperscript{112} Enforcing the compulsory school laws in counties with a high African American population would prove costly to the county and state.

Montgomery county officials had gotten around the “Negro problem” with the 1907 County High School Act, which stipulated that only one high school must be established in each county.\textsuperscript{113} There was no question that it would be a high school for Whites only.\textsuperscript{114} As Alabamians saw it, the pattern of inequitable observance of educational opportunities for all of Montgomery’s citizens “did not mean that Negroes were to be deprived of any educational opportunities.”\textsuperscript{115} It simply meant that “the largest portion of the public funds for education were to be used in schools for white children.”\textsuperscript{116} Montgomery had been reluctant to share in the spirit of the “Educational Awakening” because of its “constant guarding of a principle that the white

\textsuperscript{112} State Education Report, 1908, 94.

\textsuperscript{113} Alabama State Legislature passed a 1907 County School Act, providing that “the people of the county were required to construct a building worth at least $5,000, equip it, and deed the building, equipment, and five acres of land to the State. Further, the Act provided that the State and County should co-operate in the establishment of the school, the County to furnish the plant and the State the teachers. See “Ozark Centennial Section,” \textit{Dale County, Alabama, Southern Star} 1970, Dale County Archives News, www.usgwarchives.net.

\textsuperscript{114} State Education Report, 1905-1906, 6. While Alabama was funding schooling for White teens by providing funds for at least one high school for each county, it depended on the John F. Slater Fund to provide financial aid to provide high school education in industrial, agricultural, and teacher preparation training for Blacks. See Redcay, \textit{County Training Schools}, 31-35.

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 196.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.; The generosity of the Slater Fund is certainly to be commended for it support of Black education; however, this goes to the argument that Black were channeled into manual training. See Redcay, \textit{County Training Schools}, 31-35.
people considered paramount: White supremacy." \[117\] It was in this environment that Beverly served as leader of the state-supported normal school for African Americans that offered college preparatory courses of study.

During his presidency of 1915 to 1920, Beverly was under extreme pressure from the state to focus on agriculture and manual arts as central components of an industrial arts curriculum. However, Beverly set to work to further develop the Normal School’s liberal arts program and began to develop a “junior college” course of study. Having grown up in Alabama within the “southern caste” system, Beverly agreed with the esteemed Reverend Alexander Crummell’s evaluation of an industrial arts education as a “caste education.” \[118\]

The Negro Race in this land must repudiate this absurd notion which is stealing on the American mind. The race must declare that it is not be put into a single groove; and for the simple reason (1) that man was made by his Maker to traverse the whole circle of existence, above as well as below; and that the university is the kernel of all true civilization, of all race elevation. And (2) that the Negro mind, imprisoned for nigh three hundred years, needs breadth and freedom, largeness, altitude, and elasticity. \[119\]

In a similar vein, oral histories reported that from the earliest years, State Normal School followed the “Du Bois model” for higher education, not the Hampton-Tuskegee model. \[120\]

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\[119\] Ibid.

\[120\] The “Du Bois model” was frequently mentioned by the former students of Lab High interviewed for this study. They elaborated that the school’s curriculum was designed to prepare students to enter college and study any field they chose, although, the vast majority of graduates pursued careers in education. Emphasis was on preparing one “for life” not for a laboring job. In addition to Du Bois’ brilliant publication, *The Souls of Black Folk*, in which he devoted a chapter to Booker T. Washington, debating the benefits of industrial education, Du Bois seized every forum to educate and clarify why African Americans should receive a liberal arts education. For example, in a letter appearing in a newspaper during this period Du Bois wrote: “The answer is perfectly clear. The present lowly tasks should be done by colored people and done well, but they should bend every energy and make every sacrifice to select and discover through education the brains and ability which will raise the Negro race to its rightful equality.
Beverly corresponded with the General Education Board (GEB), reminding the officers that his institution “was intended for a normal school and a school for higher education of the colored race.”

As president of State Normal School, Beverly placed his photograph in the inside front cover of the school’s “Annual Catalogue,” just as Paterson had done. The catalogue stated that the “Standard Schools” in the institution included the “Junior College, Senior High School, High School Normal, Junior High School, Special Preparatory School (for “over-grown pupils”), Training or Practice School, and School of Music,” with each school boasting “expert directors.” In the school’s catalogue Beverly noted that “students may qualify in the State Normal School for any of the “new certificates issued under authority of the State Board of Education.” This opportunity and endorsement by the state met “a long felt need of superintendents.” Teaching certificates were issued in five ranks; the lowest, “Rank I,” indicated that students had received an education that met the requirements of a “Third Grade Certificate” issued by the state. The highest was “Rank V,” which met the state requirements for

with the rest of the races of the world. Persons who oppose this perfectly rational program—a program which every civilized nation is following today—are those who wish to keep the black man forever as a ‘hewer of wood and drawer of water….’ It is such people that discourage gifted colored children from entering the high school and going to college. It is such people who pay Negro demagogues to advocate industrial education as a sole and sufficient educational program.” See W. E. B. Du Bois, letter to the editor, Indianapolis Star (April 8, 1912), as cited in “Selected Essays,” W. E. B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts, Special Collections, Digital Archives, http://www.library.umass.edu/spcoll/digital/writings.htm.

121 Watkins, ASU History, 50.

122 Catalogue of the Faculty and Students and Announcement of Courses, 13. The catalogues did not specify an age bracket for what qualified as “over-grown.” One may infer the that school followed the national age brackets (Dept. of Education report data ranging from 14 to 19) for high school students and “over-grown” represented students who were older than nineteen years old.

123 Beverly succeeded in achieving the awarding of First Class teacher certifications issued by the Alabama State Board of Education to State Normal School four-year high school graduates. Beverly’s stated aim was to encourage students to remain in school through the Junior College program to earn the Class A certification. Annual Catalogue, 1920-1921, State Normal School, (Montgomery, Ala.: Paragon Press, 1920), 12.

124 Ibid.
a “Class A Professional Elementary Certificate.” This “First Grade Certificate, with two years professional training beyond high school graduation,” was the highest certificate the state issued for qualified teachers.  Another benefit to the students for investing in their education, beyond the level of certificate obtained, was how long the certificate was good for. For example, the 1920 catalogue listed:

Graduates from the Junior College course of this institution will receive from State Board of Education a certificate of Class A rank, good for six years. Graduates from the High School Normal will received from State Board of Education the Pre-normal Professional Certificate of the First Class, good for 3 years.

Courses offered at State Normal included:

I. English:
   1. Grammar and Composition
   2. Rhetoric and Composition
   3. American Literature
   4. Public Speaking

II. Mathematics:
   1. Arithmetic
   2. General Mathematics
   3. Algebra
   4. Plane Geometry
   5. Solid Geometry

III. Science:
   1. Biology
   2. Physics
   3. Chemistry
   4. Physiography
   5. Agriculture

IV. History and Civics:
   1. Alabama History

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125 Ibid.

126 *Catalogue of the Faculty and Students and Announcement of Courses 1920-1921*, 5, ASU Archives. Other than correspondence between Beverly and the State Superintendent, indication that the state awarded “Class A” State Teacher Certificate to State Normal School graduates does not appear in primary archival evidence until 1921, under the leadership of George Washington Trenholm.
2. Old World Background to American History
3. American History
4. Civics

V. Education

These courses of study stand in contrast to the descriptions found in studies of other high schools in the South’s “Black Belt.” A 1953 study of “Negro Education in the Alabama Black Belt” during this period offers a good example.¹²⁷ Glen N. Sisk, a professor of history at Georgia Technical Institute, presented detailed evidence of the grossly disproportionate state funding for White and Black education. Sisk included data on the disparity in White and Black teachers’ salaries and reported that expenditures for White teachers in Wilcox County were $10.50 per pupil, versus expenditures for Black teachers of $.37 per pupil for Black teachers. Sisk found that most Black teachers “of the Black Belt held third grade certificates”—the lowest certificate issued by the state—if they were certified at all.¹²⁸

Perhaps in an effort to find something positive in Black public education, Sisk highlighted the fact that “a few Black Belt Negro students” went on to higher education. He asserted that the students who were “designated as ‘normal’ or ‘college students,’ followed a course of study which emphasized mathematics and ancient languages.”¹²⁹ Other than citing an 1880 journal to support his analysis, he offered no other explanation.¹³⁰ He did elaborate on two “shining examples” of industrial arts schools that were “patterned after the Tuskegee system of vocational

¹²⁷ See Glen N. Sisk, “Negro Education in the Alabama Black Belt, 1875-1900,” *Journal of Negro Education* 22, no. 2 (Spring 1953): 126-135. It is interesting to note that Sisk established a specific period of analysis in the title of his essay of 1875-1900; however, a substantial part of his evidence is drawn from the early twentieth century. This JNE essay was a slice of his dissertation research, “Alabama Black Belt: A Social History, 1875-1917,” (PhD diss., Duke University, 1951). Sisk published more than a dozen articles on Black education in “Alabama’s Black Belt,” in such journals as *Journal of Negro Education, Peabody Journal*, and *Journal of American History*.

¹²⁸ Sisk, 131.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 133.

¹³⁰ Sisk referenced as support of his claim the *Livingston Journal*, (Je 11, 1880), 133.
training.” Sisk concluded, however, that “these schools, helpful though they were, were but atolls in a vast sea of ignorance.” His final point was a directive that “one should not have an impression that Negro education in the Black Belt was anything but abysmally poor.”

This study, in contrast, focuses on the State Normal School, located in the Black Belt of Alabama, which by 1915 was a four-year degree-granting high school that had a comprehensive liberal arts curriculum, and by 1919 offered a two-year post-high school course of study and, with authorization from the State Superintendent of Education, awarded “First Grade” teaching certificates to its normal school graduates. Thus, it begs the question of why this researcher overlooked this evidence. The description of schooling for African Americans in the Deep South as “abysmally poor” was not unique to his analysis but represented the common notion about Black schooling that went unchallenged until recently.

While Sisk’s study, and those like it, might have raised awareness of the fraudulent funding practices in public education in the South, it ignored evidence of “first rate” secondary education for Blacks that did exist. It provided an inaccurate and incomplete historical portrait of Southern Black schooling that remains in the minds of many today. In the early 1940s,

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132 Ibid., 135.

133 Ibid.

134 Scholars have argued that one reason for the overwhelming number of articles published about unequal funding and desperately poor conditions of Black schooling was to build a case for the negatives effects of segregated schooling as part of the effort to reverse Plessy v. Ferguson.

135 This is not to argue Sisk’s data on funding inequities or poorly prepared Black teachers, but to make the point that such history which only presented the extremely negative or wanting aspects of Black education did a disservice not only to Black history, but to all scholars and citizens. As Du Bois stated in his 1898 essay, the Negro Problem, “The scope of any social study is first of all limited by the general attitude of public opinion toward truth and truth-seeking.” Du Bois asserted that we, as scholars, must have “but one simple aim: the discovery of truth.” See W. E. B. Du Bois, “The Study of the Negro Problems,” The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, XI (January, 1898): 1-23.
Melville Herskovits’ *The Myth of the Negro Past* declared that “a study of the Negro’s past is important in developing better race relations, because such study shapes attitudes toward Negroes on the part of white persons and attitudes of Negroes themselves.”\(^{136}\) Thus, from another point of view, the numerous articles and essays published that described Black education as in the typical example of Sisk’s 1953 study did not correspond to the experiences of thousands of African Americans whose schooling was far from “abysmal.”

There is no doubt that African American public education was grossly underfunded and the injustices of inadequate funding and other social barriers severely impeded educational advances for African Americans. However, even within this period of overt racism and flagrant inequities, a “first grade” teaching and learning environment flourished. William Beverly was an example of a Black “man of much intellectual force” with the drive, vision, and courage to build a foundation for future educators.\(^{137}\)

To further appreciate Beverly’s perspective as an African American president of a state-funded institution for higher learning in the Deep South, it is helpful to consider other advances that were occurring in his city at the time. While Beverly had incorporated Black history and culture into his curriculum, using his own research and writing, in the same period the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History was founded in 1915, and held its first annual meeting in 1916, where renowned intellectual and essayist, Kelly Miller, head of the sociology department at Howard University, presented his paper on “The Place of Negro History in Our Schools.”\(^{138}\) In that same year, Carter Woodson published the first issue of *The Journal of*


\(^{137}\) “John William Beverly,” newspaper clipping, n.d., Box ASU Presidents, ASU Archives.

Negro History, the association’s scholarly periodical, which earned rave reviews.\textsuperscript{139} Considering Beverly’s own scholarly pursuits in historical research and his reference to supplementing State Normal High School’s history courses with “Negro history,” undoubtedly Beverly would have been aware of and perhaps incorporated Woodson’s Journal in his own history classes.\textsuperscript{140}

Beverly’s presidency also coincided with the burgeoning NAACP branches in Alabama. In 1913, Alabama was the first of the Southern states to open an NAACP branch, and Montgomery was the first city to open a branch in the post-World War I era in 1918. In 1916, musician, novelist, and social activist, James Weldon Johnson, was appointed national field director for the NAACP and became Executive Secretary in 1920.\textsuperscript{141} Under Johnson’s leadership, NAACP membership mushroomed. Historian Dorothy Autrey, in “Can These Bones Live?: The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in Alabama, 1918-1930,” reported that the membership in the NAACP for 1918 totaled 9,869, representing eighty-five branches.\textsuperscript{142} “By the end of 1918,” Autrey reported, “its members had increased to nearly 44,000 in 165 chapters.\textsuperscript{143} By the end of 1919, eight more branches were organized in the state of Alabama, while national

\textsuperscript{139} Woodson mailed copies of this first JNE issue to a number of university presidents, many of whom wrote to him of their favorable impressions of his “historical journal of excellent scientific quality.” See Carter G. Woodson, Journal of Negro History 1, no. 1 (Jan., 1916): 1-294, 146.

\textsuperscript{140} Beverly’s History of Alabama was used as source material for JNH article. See Journal of Negro History 5, no. 1 (Jan., 1920): 63-119, 64.

\textsuperscript{141} James Weldon Johnson attended high school and college at Atlanta University. While Johnson’s attendance predates the formal establishment of Atlanta’s “laboratory” school, he graduated from Atlanta University “Preparatory Division,” a forerunner of the Laboratory High School. This goes to the point of the strength of high schools as part of HBCU’s. See Sondra Kathryn Wilson, ed., The Selected Writings: The New York Age Editorials, (1914-1923), Volume I (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), chronology. As a competitor in Atlanta University’s Quiz Club in English Composition and Oratory, Johnson won the prize for oration in 1892, “The Best Methods of Removing the Disabilities of Caste from the Negro.” See Wilson, ed., The Selected Writings of James Weldon Johnson: Social, Political, and Literary Essays, Volume II (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 423.

\textsuperscript{142} Dorothy Autrey, “Can These Bones Live?: The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in Alabama, 1918-1930,” Journal of Negro History 82, no. 1 (1997): 1-12, 1.

\textsuperscript{143} Ibid.
membership increased to 91,203.\textsuperscript{144} And by 1920, African American Alabamians boasted thirteen NAACP branches, ranking it in the top five of the Southern states for NAACP representation and membership.\textsuperscript{145}

Following philosopher Alain Locke, Dorothy Autrey described this period as part of the “New Negro” movement, characterized by “more assertive, self-reliant blacks who were less inclined to accept positions of subjugation.”\textsuperscript{146} While there is no record of William Beverly’s membership in the NAACP during these years, Beverly certainly exemplified the characteristics associated with the “New Negroes.” He was highly self-reliant, action-oriented, and determined to advance African American education in Alabama through a comprehensive liberal arts curriculum.

Paralleling the growth of the NAACP was the reemergence of the Ku Klux Klan where the “revived organization got its start in Alabama in 1916.” Branches, or “klaverns,” were established throughout the state, and politicians were known to tacitly or overtly condone White-supremacist initiatives.\textsuperscript{147}

During Beverly’s term in office as first Black president of the nation’s first state-supported secondary and collegiate institution for African Americans, the Alabama governors were Charles Henderson (1915-1919) and Thomas Kilby (1919-1923). Both Democrats, Henderson was a native Alabamian, regarded as the “business governor” for his “business approach” to running the state’s resources, and had been a successful businessman in his hometown of Troy. Twenty-eight years before being elected as governor in 1915, Henderson founded Troy State Normal School (for Whites), the same year that Governor Seay had signed the law that State Normal

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\textsuperscript{144} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{145} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., 2; Also see Alain Locke, ed., \textit{The New Negro: An Interpretation} (New York, 1925, reprint, 1968).

School and University for Colored Students and Teachers had to leave Marion, Alabama. Henderson attended Howard College in Marion but left before graduating to return to Troy to help run the family business at the death of his father and opened Troy State Normal School.\textsuperscript{148}

Thomas Erby Kilby was born in Tennessee but soon moved to Alabama, where he had his first success in Alabama politics at the age of thirty when elected to serve as Anniston’s mayor in 1905. Within six years, he was elected to Alabama’s Senate from 1911 to 1915, and then as Alabama’s eighth Lieutenant Governor, 1915-1919, before being elected Governor of Alabama in 1919. While Lieutenant Governor, Kilby successfully fought to minimize federal intervention by strengthening Alabama’s anti-vigilantism campaign.\textsuperscript{149} Kilby is best known for his “settlement” of the violent Alabama Coal Strike in 1920, quashing the protests and demands of the United Mine Workers (UMW) in Alabama. The Alabama UMW included Black and White workers, which was an overt challenge to White supremacy in the state of Alabama. After months of violence and unrest, Kilby was named as arbitrator and used state troopers to evict thousands of workers from their company homes. In his public statement condemning the role of African American workers, Kilby declared:

\begin{quote}
It is rather difficult to understand how such a large number of men could be induced so deliberately to disregard such an obligation of honor. The only explanation, perhaps, lies in the fact that from 70 per cent to 80 per cent of the miners are Negroes. The southern Negro is easily misled, especially when given a permanent and official place in an organization in which both races are members.\textsuperscript{150}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{148} Troy State Normal School is now Troy University.

\textsuperscript{149} An anti-lynching law was sponsored by the NAACP for federal intervention in those states which demonstrated lax lynching laws. Alabamians wanted to manage its own lynching issues and Kilby, with the help of attorney Horace Wilkinson, launched a campaign of anti-vigilantism to prove Alabama was appropriately punishing its lynchers. See Glenn Feldman, \textit{From Demagogue to Dixiecrat: Horace Wilkinson and the Politics of Race} (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, Inc., 1995), 37; Kris Shepard, “Conservatism and Its Cousins in Twentieth-Century America,” review of \textit{From Demagogue to Dixiecrat: Horace Wilkinson and the Politics of Race} by Glenn Feldman, \textit{The Historical Journal} 41, no. 3 (Sep., 1998): 901-908.

\textsuperscript{150} \textit{The Survey}, Volume 46, eds., Edward Thomas Devine, Paul Underwood Kellogg, Charity Organization Society of the City of New York (New York: Survey Associates, April 29, 1921). 52. For further discussion of the political context see Ronal L. Lewis, \textit{Black Coal Miners in America: Race, Class, and Community Conflict}, 1780-
Despite racial and workers’ violence, Beverly was making considerable inroads in preparing well-educated and professional African Americans to serve the state as educators in the public schools. Carson Ryan, Jr., the editor of School Life, the official organ of the United States Bureau of Education in the Department of Interior, published his monthly report, which included an article by P. P. Claxton, U.S. Commissioner of Education, entitled, “What Southern Leaders Think of Education for the Negro: A Symposium.” The Commissioner’s report included excerpts from a letter that he had sent to the Southern states’ governors and state superintendents and selections from their responses to the questions he had posed.\(^{151}\) Claxton offered his evaluation of the benefits that derived from the South’s support of education for African Americans. “The shortage of labor in the south the migration of the [N]egroes, and the illiteracy of the [N]egro soldier,” Claxton wrote, had “combined to give new and increased interest to the education of [N]egroes.” He declared that the “whole country, and especially the South” could not “be as prosperous and as efficient as it should be” without properly educating Black Southerners.\(^{152}\) He formulated five overarching questions and asked the governors and superintendents for a “brief statement” of “conviction on the importance of educating the [N]egroes” in response to his questions:

1. Can the South develop its economic resources without educating the [N]egro?
2. Is it possible to make these States sanitary so long as the [N]egroes are not taught the laws of sanitation?\(^{153}\)

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\(^{152}\) Ibid., 14.

\(^{153}\) Teaching health and sanitation to African Americans was a central issue in education for years. However, it is interesting to consider that Claxton wrote this article following the influenza “pandemic” which struck Alabama, as reported by The Public Health Reports, October 4, 1918. Between 1918 and 1919, doctors in Alabama were described as being “on duty day and night” and “men were dropping like flies.” See United States Department of Health and Human Services, Alabama, 1918-1919.
3. Is the moral welfare of the South safe if the [N]egroes are not given the essentials of an education?
4. What should be the character of the education of the masses of the [N]egroes?
5. How important is it to train physicians, teachers, and ministers for a people who form one-tenth of the Nation’s population and one-third of the South’s population?154

Claxton received twenty-six replies and selected excerpts as “representative” responses. In response to the first question about economic benefits to the South in providing education for African Americans, Claxton received a unanimous response. Most certainly, African Americans should be “properly trained” in order to become a positive “factor in economic development.”155

The second question addressed the possibility of educating African Americans about the “laws of sanitation”; responses were “Obviously not,” “It is imperative,” and “clearly impossible.”156 One respondent made his point clear through a disparaging metaphor revealing his perspective on African Americans’ contributions to the South: “Can we expect to keep our body clean and healthy with a running sore?”157

To the questions that related to the character of education for African Americans, there was complete agreement that “the predominant type of education given the [N]egro should be such as to give him manual and technical skill ... industrial education.”158 While one respondent suggested that “a good common school education” should be the aim, as it would be most suitable to teach “them there is work for all to do.”159 Another recommendation encouraged a “predominantly” manual arts education but added that training “of physicians, teachers, and


155 Ibid.

156 Ibid.

157 Ibid.

158 Ibid.

159 Ibid.
ministers” was also necessary “to meet the needs of the race.”160 Yet another respondent recommended that while he, too, believed in an emphasis on “industrial education,” he clarified, that he believed “teachers colleges” were also essential, but best managed “under white race administration.”161 Another respondent said succinctly, “Mostly industrial, but the [N]egroes themselves should be allowed to answer this question.” This stood in contrast to other opinions about who should control of Black education.162

Claxton’s fifth question regarding the importance of educating Black “physicians, teachers, and ministers” reflected a strong consensus with phrases such as “important … especially [N]egro teachers,” “of supreme importance,” “all important,” and “more important … than it is for the white people.”163 The disconnect in the Commissioner of Education report was how to reconcile the unanimous and strongly worded recommendation that schools for African Americans predominantly teach “industrial” or “manual arts,” with the consensus regarding the importance of training Black physicians, teachers, and ministers.

The U.S. Bureau of Education’s emphasis on industrial education for African Americans meant that the high school and Model School at State Normal School for Colored Students were in a precarious position. While the Normal School included a smattering of “industrial arts” courses, it was predominantly a liberal arts education. Further, the Model School modeled best practices for liberal arts training. Therefore, Model School students were enjoying an “expert” liberal arts education that prepared them to teach and encouraged them to continue their education. Student teachers were receiving their “senior” training in liberal arts, not industrial or manual arts.

160 Ibid.
161 Ibid.
162 Ibid.
163 Ibid, 16.
The Commissioner’s report allowed a narrow opening for the education of “physicians, teachers, and ministers.” Recognizing the opportunity, William Beverly steadfastly planted his school in that space, determined to shape his teaching institution as a normal school that would eventually grow into an institution of higher education, preparing its graduates for professional careers. But evident from the report’s unanimity on the emphasis of industrial education for African Americans, it required careful management of the tension that existed between what Alabama’s White educational leaders envisioned as the “proper” education for its Black citizens and what the Black citizens themselves desired.

To make matters clearer to African American education leaders in Alabama, or more tense, the Office of Education issued a 522-page report in 1919 entitled *An Education Study of Alabama.* While most of the report dealt with issues pertaining to educating Alabama’s White population, it included several references to Black education. One section was titled “Negro Schools in the Cities.” Highlighting the disparities between Alabama’s White and Black public school systems, it stated that “in reality” there were “two systems of schools instead of one,” with real disparities between the two, especially “in the distribution of funds.” The report provided a revealing justification for the unequal distribution.

It is argued, not without some show of reason, that if a city has a large percentage of Negroes, it is not worthwhile to give them their per capita share of the money, since it will not be expended upon the Negroes, but upon the white children of the city. It would certainly sound reasonable that if a city or other district is not proposing to

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165 Ibid., 269.

166 Ibid., 269. In addition to “Negro Schools in the Cities,” there were a few sections that dealt with the education for its Black citizens, such as “Negro Education in Rural Sections” and “Negro Schools in the Cities.” Other sections included an occasional sub reference to issues of education for African Americans, such as section “3. School Population, Enrollment, and Attendance,” sub section, “(g) The lengthening of the school year for white children to 9 months and for colored children to a minimum of 6 months,” 511.
educate the Negroes it is not entitled to receive its full share of the money which the State apportions for educating them.\textsuperscript{167}

Of course, this report of minimal funding for African American education was not news to Beverly. He tried to balance the triad of funding sources and their associated \textit{shared} interests in educating African Americans—the state of Alabama, Northern philanthropic organizations, and the African American community. Members of this triumvirate, while influenced by each other, were at no time equally balanced, especially in relation to Beverly’s desired outcomes for the State Normal School. The state made a case that its limited funds could not be stretched to equitably accommodate both White and Black public schools. In the minds of the state’s policymakers, White education was more important and came first. As a result, even the state’s designated funds for African American education rarely reached Black state-supported institutions. As the 1919 U.S. Bureau of Education \textit{Education Study of Alabama} reported,

This situation seems to rise not so much from any desire to deprive the Negro of the education which he should receive as from the fact that there are not funds enough to meet the school needs. The principle is generally accepted of providing first for the needs of the white children and then giving the Negro what is left. Ordinarily what is left is very little.\textsuperscript{168}

The state relied on the consistent support from Northern philanthropists for Black public and private education. If money from philanthropic organizations reached Black schools, that would relieve the state from its financial responsibility or burden. Additionally, the state expected African American communities to raise funds for their own public schooling, in addition to paying local and state taxes.\textsuperscript{169} The state reasoned that the taxes from African

\textsuperscript{167} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{168} Ibid.

American citizens were so low, based on low income and limited property holdings, that expecting Blacks to raise additional funds to support their own “free” public education was reasonable. But Du Bois’ 1901 and 1911 Atlanta University Studies on the *Negro Common School* demonstrated that African American communities paid more in state taxes than was expended on Black public schooling in Southern states.\(^{170}\)

In 1916, the Normal School trustees applied for a grant from the GEB to help supplement the state’s support. As part of the appeal for GEB funding, the trustees wrote:

> Although an institution owned and controlled by the State of Alabama, this school is in every good and proper sense, the property of the Negro race. The Negroes gave the land to the State, and to say nothing of many improvements made by them from time to time, they contribute anywhere from $3,000.00 to $5,000.00 annually in tuition towards its support.

Although by 1919 Beverly had expanded his institution into a four-year degree-granting liberal arts high school and teacher certification program, noted for its thorough preparation and education of teachers by outside authorities, his achievements did not earn him admiration or even recognition in the *Education Study of Alabama*. Indeed, the study reported that “the very worst school for white children [was] with few exceptions better than the best school for Negroes.”\(^{171}\) Consistent with the message that industrial arts was the most suitable for African Americans’ education, the report included Birmingham’s high school for Blacks as an example one of the “few exceptions” that was deemed worthy of description. Birmingham’s high school for Blacks offered a starkly different view from the educational outcomes at State Normal School.

The report commended the work of the city of Birmingham and its Black high school as “the only city in the State that [was] undertaking to do anything adequate for its Negro children,

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\(^{170}\) Du Bois, *Negro Common School*, ii; *Common School and the American Negro*.

\(^{171}\) *An Education Study of Alabama*, 269.
along the lines of industrial training.”\textsuperscript{172} Describing the high school as “doing one of the most interesting pieces of educational work in the State,” the report praised the “work in carpentry, painting, bricklaying, shoemaking, [and] gardening.”\textsuperscript{173} Meriting special acclaim was the school’s efforts in providing an education that had proven useful not only to its students, but to the city as well. Students helped to construct school buildings and classroom furniture, and they acted as nurses at the local hospital when it was overloaded with Black patients. In the commercial sector, “the leading hotels of the city call[ed] for the trained boys and girls of this high school to help serve at special banquets and receptions,” which provided an example of the jobs that would be available to them upon graduation.\textsuperscript{174} In short, manual and industrial arts education was best for the South’s African American citizens, while also aiding economic growth in the city and region.

After highlighting the “useful” and “interesting” work of Birmingham’s high school, the report emphasized the benefits to the state in supporting industrial arts education for African Americans. “It may be recognized,” it stated, “that the Negro is industrially an asset to the South, but,” it warned, “it may become a liability.”\textsuperscript{175} Leading to its final recommendations for African American education, the report stated, “This labor can never be of the greatest value to the South until the Negro receives in the schools such industrial training and such education in the fundamentals as will bring him to his highest capacity for service.”\textsuperscript{176} To that end, the 1919 report underscored the importance of industrial education and made recommendations to enhance the agricultural and mechanical arts education in the schools for African Americans.

\textsuperscript{172} Ibid., 271.

\textsuperscript{173} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{174} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{175} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{176} Ibid., 272.
Your committee very strongly recommends industrial work ... for colored high schools and to some extent colored elementary schools all over the State. The industrial ideas of Booker T. Washington are embodied in the great school for [N]egroes at Tuskegee, and are good ideas to consider in any scheme for Negro education.\textsuperscript{177}

While the report also recommended an “increase in the number of Negro teachers” to meet the high demand for teachers and overcrowded classrooms, and an “increase of State support of the colored normal schools,” it qualified that statement by saying that such an increase must comply with its other recommendations, specifically, those that pertained to funding and industrial education.\textsuperscript{178}

Theoretically, it might be argued that the same amount per capita should be expended by the cities of Alabama upon their Negro schools as upon their white schools. Practically, however, such is not the case and may not be the case for a long time.... In accordance both with humanity and with enlightened self-interest.\textsuperscript{179}

Among recommendations that directly influenced the State Normal School for Colored Students, the report included the following:

(f) Increase of State appropriation to the Agricultural and Mechanical College to the amount of the Federal Government’s aid, and provision for modern dormitories and an academic building.
(g) Provision for the eventual removal of the State normal school at Montgomery, and its relocation on a tract of at least 150 acres of land.
(h) If the State finds it undesirable to carry out recommendations (f) and (g), the two schools to be consolidated and an agricultural and mechanical normal school to be established instead as such a place as will be most accessible to the large body of the Negro population of the State; the school to have at least 150 acres of good agricultural land and ample provision for boarding and lodging these students.\textsuperscript{180}

\textsuperscript{177} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{178} Ibid., 512, 522, 272.
\textsuperscript{179} Ibid., 272.
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid., 512.
The limited records remaining from Beverly’s time in office indicate that he did not comply with the report’s recommendations to emphasize farming and manual arts.\(^{181}\) Even in the face of the U.S. Bureau of Education 1919 report, African Americans desired a liberal arts education and training as teachers. Empowered by his own educational journey, and attentive to the interests of his own community, Beverly was determined to respond accordingly. Consistent with his predecessor, he maintained “the institution as a normal school with a liberal arts base” with “minimum offerings in industrial education.”\(^ {182}\) Once in the position as president, the changes Beverly had made in the course catalogue reflected the four-year high school liberal arts program that fully prepared the graduates to be certified to teach the liberal arts. Nor did he take action to consolidate State Normal School with Alabama’s Agricultural and Mechanical College.

Instead, Beverly endeavored to expand his institution and raise the quality of teacher education. His goal was not to prepare students for work in the fields and kitchens but to prepare them for the opportunity to become physicians, teachers, or ministers. State Normal School under Paterson and Beverly shaped its curriculum toward preparing qualified teachers. In Beverly’s mind, a liberal arts education and preparing well-qualified teachers was the best way to improve the lives of the greatest numbers of African American citizens. The challenge Beverly faced was to keep his liberal arts high school and teacher preparation program open and thriving with the limited support from the state.

Beverly sought to expand his institution. In addition to continuing to teach the senior level courses, he supervised the school’s multiple programs and the students’ and staff’s needs, which required his constant attention. As the school’s president, he wanted to be at the school and available full time to manage the daily demands of leading the institution. To augment the

\(^{181}\) The reports included the 1919 national study of education conducted by the U.S. Bureau of Education, the U.S. Commissioner’s report in *School Life*, 1919, and the U. S. Bureau of Education, *Education Study of Alabama*, 1919. Historians, such as Charles Varner and archivists at Alabama State University Special Collections, and the published history of Alabama State University by Levi Watkins have noted the damaged or lost records of John William Beverly’s term as president of the institution, resulting in limited data of the details of his presidency.

\(^{182}\) Watkins, *ASU History*, 50.
funding his institution received from the state and from the GEB, Beverly conducted an expanded fundraiser as part of the Founder’s Day celebrations, aiming to use part of the funds to construct a residence for the president on campus. He personally negotiated the discarded “war-surplus materials” that were donated from Camp Sheridan in Montgomery, with a plan to use them to construct the on-campus residence.\(^{183}\)

Additionally, Beverly negotiated the purchase of the old “County Poor House” property, which was used as the school’s first men’s dormitory, Providence Hall. Also during this period, the institution purchased an 80-acre farm. The farmland acquisition was part of the state’s vision for the Normal School to expand agricultural education.

Striving to match the hopes and dreams of the Black community in the context of the expectations of the Alabama State Board of Education, Beverly corresponded with the General Education Board, reminding the GEB that his institution “was intended for a normal school and a school for higher education of the colored race.”\(^{184}\) While the GEB might have supported Beverly’s plans, the Alabama State Board of Education did not. Then, abruptly in 1920, Beverly was asked to step down as the Normal School’s president. There was no explanation found in the Board of Education minutes, but it might be that the well-educated William Beverly and his action-oriented leadership style during a period of increased tension in relations in Alabama, and throughout the nation, were viewed as a threat.

Beverly had made significant gains for his institution during his presidency, even while encumbered by the rigid segregation and social customs of the era. His predecessor, a White man, had access to “friendly places” that were dominated by White leadership and where he had successfully gained support for the Normal School over his thirty-seven year tenure.\(^{185}\) In


\(^{184}\)Watkins, \textit{ASU History}, 50.

\(^{185}\)Charles Varner, Jr., “The State Normal School Takes on Black Leadership” (lecture, Alabama State University, n.d.).
contrast, Beverly was a Black man and “was not welcomed at white churches, businessmen’s meetings and luncheons, nor was he free to attend the State Board of Education meetings to put forth his petitions for assistance” and gain support for his vision for the institution.  

Beverly posed a threat to the social order in Montgomery, and members of the Alabama State Board of Education judged him as “insubordinate.” His efforts to establish a president’s residence on campus without first receiving permission from the board was “seen by the supervising Board of Directors as an act of ‘impudence and high handedness.’” Simply put, Beverly “forgot his place” and was severely admonished for being “uppity.” As the pioneering first Black president of a state-sponsored institution, “he was met with racism from his first day on the job.” In 1920, with his Normal School Catalogue in the hands of the African American community, Beverly was relieved of his duties as president. However, he was allowed to remain at the school as a teacher. In the short time he was president, Beverly had courageously accomplished a great deal.

By 1920, the forty-two-year-old State Normal School had established a highly regarded reputation for effectively preparing African American teachers. Moreover, due to the limited provisions for adequate public education for Blacks, the school also functioned to prepare students to enter the high school and junior college division. Consequently, it provided a rare

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186 Ibid.
187 Ibid.
188 Charles Varner, Jr., “ASU’s Role in the Struggle for Civil Rights” (lecture, Alabama State University, n.d.), 2.
190 Varner, discussion.
191 Beverly continued to serve as dean and instructor at State Normal School for another two years before taking the position of instructor at Prairie View Normal and Industrial College in Texas. Beverly died in 1924 and was buried in Montgomery.
opportunity for elementary and high school students to receive a liberal arts education grounded in sophisticated and effective pedagogy drawn from Beverly’s own education. At the time Beverly stepped down, the State Normal School’s “Summary of Students” included:

Table 3. Summary of Students\textsuperscript{192}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Junior College</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior High School</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior High School</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Preparatory School</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training School</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Department</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music Department</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night School</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>247</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counted Twice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>624</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Beverly had struggled against the powerful wave that pushed African Americans into the “type of education” that would provide the “proper training” in manual labor, and he was summarily put in his place by the Alabama State Board of Education. With the sudden removal of Beverly as president, the African American school and community were concerned about who would be appointed as the interim president and whether the progress the school had made would be compromised. Fortunately, it was not. A proven African American educator, who similarly believed in the power of a liberal arts education for teacher training, soon took the helm.

John William Beverly remained at State Normal School for an additional two years as Dean and faculty member, teaching social science and history.\textsuperscript{193} As Dean, he worked with

\textsuperscript{192} Annual Catalogue, 1920-921, State Normal School, 31.
G. W. Trenholm to further develop the junior college program. In 1923, he accepted a faculty position at Prairie View Normal and Industrial College in Texas, teaching English and history. He died one year later, December 16, 1924, and was returned to Montgomery to be buried. Included among the “hundreds” of mourners were former students and faculty, his former classmate at Brown University, John Hope, and, of course, George Washington Trenholm.194

At the time of Beverly’s dismissal, George Washington Trenholm was the State Supervisor of Teacher Training for Colored Teachers, primarily through the summer training institutes. He had an established record of satisfying the state’s White leadership by increasing the number of Black teachers. With Trenholm already “in place,” the Alabama State Board of Education selected him to serve as “acting president” of State Normal School in Montgomery.195 Trenholm proved immediately effective. He issued a new catalogue for State Normal School, outlining the school’s mission, programs, faculty, and student summary, and returned William Burns Paterson’s picture to the inside front cover as “Founder.”196 Within a year, Trenholm was appointed “President” of State Normal School for Colored Students.

George Washington Trenholm: “A Master Builder”197

G. W. Trenholm was a proven leader in Black education. Keenly intelligent and a capable administrator, he deftly managed the tension of leading a state institution for Black teachers in an

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193 Catalogue of the Faculty and Students for 1921-1922.


195 The State Normal Courier-Journal 4, no. 9 (July 23, 1926), 2.

196 Catalogue of the Faculty and Students for 1921-1922.

environment of overt racism and legal segregation. His official “State Career” began as early as 1916 when he was appointed as “State Conductor of Teachers’ Institutes,” having run the summer county institutes since 1911. As State Supervisor of Teacher-Training for Negroes, he was responsible for the “supervision of all summer schools and agencies for the training of teachers.” Trenholm had earned his bachelor of philosophy degree from Fenton Normal and Commercial College in Fenton, Genesee County, Michigan, and attended the University of Chicago graduate school of education for six summers. From 1896 to 1916, he served as principal of the public school in Tuscumbia, Alabama, before assuming his state conductor responsibilities.

Immediately upon assuming the presidency of the State Normal School, Trenholm organized the school into a quarter system; this enabled students to enter the program at different times throughout the year. He further restricted the elementary school enrollment to 165 students, and reorganized the school in the 6-3-3 plan—elementary, junior high school, and high school—consistent with the trend throughout the nation. Trenholm implemented a recruiting effort for the State Normal School, resulting in an increase of “more than 250 out-of-town students,” representing “every section of the state.” His marketing of the school’s programs included frequent public speaking engagements, a letter-writing campaign to high school students, and

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200 For a thorough discussion of George Washington Trenholm’s role as principal and the history of Tuscumbia’s public high school, see Morris and Morriss, Creating Caring.

networking through the state teachers’ organization, as he encouraged students to continue their education to become professionally certified teachers.202

Trenholm further developed Beverly’s work on the post-high school program, the Junior College Division, which was officially recognized by the state in 1921, at which time the State Board of Education sanctioned the awarding of the “Class A” certificate to Junior College graduates.203

Trenholm issued *The Nineteen Twenty-One Summer Quarter Bulletin* for State Normal School, trumpeting the school’s move to the quarter system and its “response to the general demand for better trained teachers among Negroes in the State of Alabama and in the South,” and its unique program to “suit the needs and the convenience of those who desire[d] to study during vacation either for general professional improvement or certificate extension or credit toward graduation.”204 The newly designed intensive summer program reflected Trenholm’s expertise and years of experience as Supervisor of the state teaching institutes, and the position of State Normal School as a state-sponsored institution. Trenholm used the 1921 *Summer Quarter Bulletin* to promote the school’s distinctive features:

1. The only Class A Normal School for colored people in the State.
2. The only Colored Normal School in the South offering a full quarter of work and standard credit courses for the summer and opportunity for real Practice School Work [laboratory school].
3. The only Institution in the State offering regular standard credit courses for colored people.
4. The only summer school in which certificate extension courses may carry classification credits.
5. The only summer school that runs six days a week and loses no time.
6. It gives better advantages for the same money.

202 G. W. Trenholm, [form] letter to students, 31 August, 1923; See also “Status of Negro Education in Alabama.”

203 The first graduates from the Junior College Division represented the class of 1923. *Catalogue of the Faculty and Students for 1921-1922*; Watkins, *ASU History*, 51.

7. The opportunity for contact with able instructors in the school room and men of national fame on the platform.\textsuperscript{205}

Trenholm’s vision for State Normal School was to increase its higher level course offerings and improve the education and training of teachers throughout Alabama and the South. His goal was to expand the normal school in curriculum and in the physical plant. The board permitted him to build the president’s residence if he could demonstrate financial support from the African American community. With permission from the state board of education and the school’s trustees, Trenholm launched a community appeal for financial support of State Normal School. Toward that end, he initiated a “building campaign,” appealing to “Alabama Negro friends inside and outside of Montgomery.”\textsuperscript{206}

Once again, Trenholm used a multi-pronged approach of personal visits, letter writing, and public speaking to generate interest and support.\textsuperscript{207} He created a “form” letter, which he mailed to his contacts in the larger Black community in 1920.

Having some educational opportunities, as well as some experience in life, you are able to appreciate thoroughly the advantages of education—the necessity that all people get a certain amount of education. Most likely again, your advantages were not what you wished for and you feel that you would like to make the opportunities better for the young people of this particular time. The State Normal School is, herewith, giving you opportunity to help in this direction. The Institution is launched upon a big building campaign.... Many other improvements are under way. Will you not help us in this campaign? We are striving to raise seven thousand dollars ($7,000). Two thousand dollars ($2,000) has been offered for a President’s Home provided that we raise a similar amount at one. We are, therefore, appealing to you for ten dollars ($10) to help in this effort. We are counting on you and expect to hear from you, in a financial way, very soon.\textsuperscript{208}

\textsuperscript{205} Ibid., 3.

\textsuperscript{206} Watkins, \textit{ASU History}, 52.

\textsuperscript{207} G. W. Trenholm, “The Vision of a “Greater Normal School Being Realized at Montgomery” \textit{Montgomery Advertiser}, December 23, 1922; G. W. Trenholm to high school graduates, 28 May 1924.

\textsuperscript{208} G. W. Trenholm, letter of appeal for building campaign, 1920. Correspondence of G. W. Trenholm; Watkins, \textit{ASU History}, 52.
In his five years as president, Trenholm was successful in expanding the State Normal School. In addition to the direct letter appeal to African Americans, Trenholm continued Beverly’s fundraising idea of an expanded Founders Day celebration, when various events were held. An opportunity that allowed a particularly successful fundraising campaign was the school’s fiftieth anniversary or Semi-Centennial, which was celebrated during Trenholm’s tenure. Trenholm created a *Souvenir Program* that not only outlined the festivities for the major celebration, including an address by Alabama’s governor William Woodward Brandon, but also invited local merchants to support the State Normal School through paid advertisements. The program mirrored the well-established Black business community of the period and its generous support of the state’s African American teaching institution in Montgomery.

With funding from the state of an annual appropriation of $20,000, a yearly grant from the GEB, student fees, and donations from the African American community, Trenholm added three new buildings to the campus—Paterson Hall (later renamed Trenholm Hall in 1929), which was used as a girl’s dormitory; Thomas Erby Kilby Hall, which was built as a dining facility; and the two-story president’s home. The president’s home, which was the official residence through 1963, was completed in 1922, using the materials Beverly had obtained. The State Normal School Library was established in 1921. Once again, it fell to the African American community to fund the library. An annual fee of $1.00 per student was charged for use of the library, and an annual “Library Book-Shower Day” event was held to acquire book donations. Almost two thousand books were collected in the early years of the campaign. The State Normal School Library was one of only three libraries open to African Americans in the state of Alabama.

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209 *Catalogue of The Faculty and Students for 1921-1922*, 15. The increased state appropriations from $16,000 to $20,000 were established during Beverly’s last year as president; H. C. Trenholm, “Some Background.” 29.

In addition to expanding the physical plant and academic programs, G. W. Trenholm collected an impressive faculty, as measured by teaching experience and education. Every one of Trenholm’s “Officers of Instruction” held a minimum of a bachelor’s degree. His instructors were graduates of Bates College, Clark University, Columbia University, Harvard University, Howard University, Lane College, Morehouse College, Talladega College, University of Chicago, and Wilberforce University. As part of his reorganization of the institution, Trenholm created the “President’s Cabinet,” which comprised his leadership team, the principals or directors of each of the eight schools: (1) Junior College, (2) Senior High School, (3) Junior High School, (4) Training School, (5) School of Extension Service, (6) Commercial School, (7) School of Music, and (8) Special Preparatory for Overgrown Pupils. Each director was held responsible for the successful management of his or her school, while also working collegially “in the ‘putting over’ of the general program.”

Trenholm’s “expert” instructors were prepared to change the lives of those who studied with them. An examination of the education and accomplishments of the members of Trenholm’s 1921 cabinet, responsible for the school’s major programs of study, reveals distinctively competent men directing the State Normal School’s programs.

Charles H. Thompson served as Principal of Training School. He also was Director of Instruction, Director of Junior College, and instructor in education and psychology. Thompson held an A.B. degree from Virginia Union University, and a Ph.B. and A.M. from University of Chicago. Thompson went on to join Howard University in 1926, where he served as Associate Professor and ultimately served as Professor and Chairman of the Department of Education, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, Dean of the Graduate School, Founder and Editor-in-Chief of *The Journal of Negro Education*.

George A. Payne served as the director of the Senior High School and instructor in science and French. In addition to a Bachelor of Science degree from

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211 *Catalogue of the Faculty and Students for 1921-1922*, 20.

212 Thompson was also Director of the Laboratory Schools, 1922-1924, See *A Handbook of Professional Inspiration for Teachers* (Montgomery: Alabama State Teachers College Laboratory High School, 1942), 19; *Catalogue of the Faculty and Students for 1923-1924*, 3.
Lane College, Payne also attended University of Chicago, summer of 1907. Prior to joining G. W. Trenholm at State Normal School as Senior High School Director in 1919, he served as “President of Miles College from 1914 to 1918.” Payne later became principal of the Laboratory High School.\textsuperscript{213}

J. F. Drake served as director of the Junior High School and as Science Teacher. While serving under G. W. Trenholm’s presidency, Drake had a degree from Talladega College and attended University of Chicago summer graduate program, 1917. Drake later went on to earn his masters at Teachers College, Columbia University and his Ph.D. at Cornell. He was appointed president of Alabama A&M University in 1927. By 1933 he was elected president of the Alabama State Teachers Association.\textsuperscript{214}

H. Councill Trenholm, Trenholm’s twenty-four year old son, served as Assistant Director of the Summer School Program, 1924, and Director of School Extension Service and instructor in education and history. H. C. Trenholm held a bachelor’s degree from Morehouse College and a Ph.B. from the University of Chicago in 1921. He later earned his master’s degree from the University of Chicago and, among other distinctions, was appointed to succeed his father as president of the State Normal School in 1925.\textsuperscript{215}

Evidence of the education and accomplishments of these men rebuts the earlier historical accounts of Southern Black schooling, which described poorly trained faculty, limited curriculum, and an emphasis on industrial arts instruction. At the same time, these directors’ career trajectories speak to the point of State Normal School’s influence regionally and nationally. The pupils of these educators enjoyed the experience of studying under these learned professionals who were at the cutting edge of their field. The individuals continued up the ladder of their chosen careers, ultimately becoming leaders of Black education in their own right and influencing countless others.

In Trenholm’s expanded and revised \textit{Catalogue of the Faculty and Students for 1921-1922 and Announcement of Courses for 1922-1923}, he reiterated the importance of preparing well-

\textsuperscript{213} \textit{Catalogue of the Faculty and Students for 1921-1922}, 8; See also HBCU Alliance, Digital Archives, http://contentdtm.auctr.edu/cdm/searchterm/AL/mode/all/page/2.

\textsuperscript{214} Ibid., 6; See also Gray, \textit{History of Alabama State Teachers Association History}.

\textsuperscript{215} \textit{State Normal School Bulletin, Nineteen Twenty Four Summer Quarter} (Montgomery, Ala: Paragon Press, 1924), 3; \textit{Catalogue of The Faculty and Students for 1921-1922}, 10, 11. Trenholm first began teaching at State Normal School in 1921, upon earning his degree from University of Chicago.
educated and professionally trained teachers. He highlighted the school’s scholastic attainments, with emphasis on academic preparation and incorporation of professional practice.\textsuperscript{216} An analysis of the catalogue indicates that Trenholm drew on his education and knowledge of the latest research and pedagogical trends, while also being attuned to the language used by the U.S. Bureau of Education and other reports and their recommendations for African American education.

An example of an enriching and sophisticated professional project mentioned by Trenholm was his plan to expand and enrich professional education by publishing “the results of various studies and investigation of teaching problems conducted under the direction of the Normal School.”\textsuperscript{217} On another level, the extracurricular activity of debating was designed to invite State Normal high school students to compete on a regional and national level as part of the “Interscholastic debating” team.\textsuperscript{218}

In addressing “laboratory work” for those who selected one of the manual arts elective offerings, such as “agriculture,” Trenholm stipulated that students could do their “laboratory work in Agriculture on garden plots found on the Campus proper.”\textsuperscript{219} However, he made it clear that while the institution owned its own eighty-acre farm, “At the present, the farm [was] not being run by student labor,” as was the case at Tuskegee Institute.\textsuperscript{220}

Trenholm’s phrases, such as “learning to do by doing,” “laboratory of methods,” and “testing theories,” reflected the progressive approaches to teacher education pursued by the leading educators of the period from Teachers College, Columbia University, and the University of Chicago.

\textsuperscript{216} Ibid., 20.
\textsuperscript{217} Ibid., 14.
\textsuperscript{218} Ibid., 15.
\textsuperscript{219} Ibid., 14.
\textsuperscript{220} Ibid.
of Chicago. Alternatively, certain words and phrases, such as “best fit” and “prepare workers” to meet Alabama’s needs, reflected the language used in the recommendations for Black education made in the U. S. Bureau’s *Education Study of Alabama.*

Taken in its entirety, the tenor of the catalogue suggested a sophisticated professional teacher education program, one that was at the other end of the spectrum from the “worst” and deprived conditions of Black schooling described in many contemporary and historical studies.

Echoing John William Beverly’s earlier statement of purpose, Trenholm declared,

> It has been correctly said, “The State Normal School is not an institution for general culture for its own sake; it is a special school, a professional school. Its sole purpose is to confer on its students that education, discipline, professional training and practice skill which will best fit them for teaching in the public schools of the State.”

Further, Trenholm emphasized that only students who were sufficiently prepared for advanced work were permitted to enter the “Senior High School” division. Applicants who held a “certificate of completion” showing that “nine grades of standard school work” had been completed were admitted to the senior high school program. Moreover, State Normal School “reserve[d] the right to examine any applicant or to change classification if investigation of one’s record” indicated that the student was not sufficiently prepared for high school work.

Trenholm spelled out the “three-fold” aim for the Senior High School:

1. To prepare workers to teach in the elementary schools of Alabama.
2. To serve as a preparatory course to the Junior College of this institution.
3. To offer standard high school work which will admit our students to any standard college.

It is important to remember context. In an environment where there were few high schools for African Americans throughout the South, and when education for Blacks was seen as
substandard, with intense pressure to prepare students for careers in such jobs as gardening and shoemaking. G. W. Trenholm had outlined a program that would prepare its students to enter “any standard level college.” Moreover, because State Normal was a “professional” school for teachers, “theoretical” and “practical education” classes were part of the curriculum. Trenholm followed the path of John William Beverly, providing pupils with a high-quality education that would prepare them for higher education and future careers as ministers or physicians, particularly heeding the clarion call for qualified teachers.

G. W. Trenholm considered the “Training School” as the “heart of the Normal School because it” served as “the laboratory of Educational Methods work.”225 The school provided the opportunity for observation of effective teaching methods and allowed for exploration and improvement of lessons and planning. Importantly, at the time it served “its pupils very well because of the superior type of teaching done by the high caliber of supervising teachers under the stimulus of the best educational thought.”226 Emphasis was placed on continuing one’s education through Senior High School, with a strong recommendation to consider enrolling in Junior College to achieve Class A state certification. Trenholm shared his philosophy of “The Three Fundamental Factors of Success” for a fruitful career and life. Drawing from diverse sources, such as essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson, poet Berton Braley, and parables from the Bible, Trenholm explained his “three essential factors” for success in life:

I. The Thing You Are ... your character ... courage, virile energy and capacity....

II. The Thing You Do ... Hard, intelligent, and efficient work has great value....

III. The Thing You Desire ... The character of the individual desire determines the character of the effort and the achievement. The man who wants merely money

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225 Ibid., 47.

226 Ibid.
... lives on a low material plane. He who aspires to intellectual and moral excellence stands on a higher plane.\textsuperscript{227}

As president of State Normal School, Trenholm believed that the school’s educational environment and purpose provided fertile ground on which one could develop these three fundamentals for success. Providing a professional teacher training school that prepared Black students for professional careers in education was Trenholm’s central aim and strategy. The comprehensive academic program of study for the senior high school included nine courses in English and literature, nine courses in foreign language, seven courses in history, eight courses in math (algebra through trigonometry), six courses in sciences (including physical geography, physics, and chemistry), and three courses in “social science,” a relatively new field of study. As part of the school’s promise of professional teacher preparation, the senior high school also included nine courses in curriculum and teaching.\textsuperscript{228} Nationally recognized high school-level texts were listed in the catalogue for each subject, including a supplement devoted to the study of “Negro History.”\textsuperscript{229} Manual training courses were not part of the core curriculum but offered only as an “elective.”\textsuperscript{230} This program of study reflected the leading curriculum recommendations and was consistent with the National Education Association’s “Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education.”\textsuperscript{231} Such an education in Alabama in the first quarter of the twentieth century was indeed a privilege for Black or White students.

As early as the 1920s, graduates from the State Normal School began to represent a Black elite that could boast a distinctive and precious education. These individuals represented

\textsuperscript{227} George Washington Trenholm’s personal manuscript with penned notes, printed on the other side of G. W. Trenholm’s State Normal School stationery. “The Three Fundamental Factors of Success.”

\textsuperscript{228} Ibid., 38-43.

\textsuperscript{229} Catalogue, 1922-1923, and Announcement of Courses, 1923-1924, 4.

\textsuperscript{230} Ibid., 37.

educated professionals and future leaders.\textsuperscript{232} For the 1921-1922 school year, taking into account State Normal’s various “schools,” it was noted that “the influence of the Normal School [had] been felt by about 2,600 persons during the year.”\textsuperscript{233} In addition to teaching, Trenholm encouraged the continued development of an alumni association, which was formalized in 1923 as the State Normal Alumni and Former Students’ Association with its own constitution.\textsuperscript{234} The “object of the Association” was to “further the advancement of the school and to promote a common fellowship among the alumni and former students.”\textsuperscript{235} Recognizing that not all of State Normal School’s students graduated, the constitution clarified that while former students were “granted all privileges of graduates or full members,” only graduates were permitted to serve as officers of the Association.\textsuperscript{236} This requirement encouraged summer institute participants to remain engaged and widened the network of the school’s supporters.

There is no doubt that G. W. Trenholm’s strategy to provide Alabama’s African Americans with a high-caliber teacher education program directly influenced the lives of thousands of

\textsuperscript{232} The notion that graduating from Lab School was a privilege and represented entry into a professional, middle class life and career was a common theme in the oral histories collected for this research. For further examination of a privileged “laboratory school” education that helped grow the Black middle class, and/or reference to laboratory high school as an “elite” education, see Lawrence Otis Graham, \textit{Our Kind of People: Inside America’s Black Upper Class} (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), 327, 337; Linda K. Fuller, ed., \textit{National Days/National Ways: Historical, Political, and Religious Celebrations Around the World} (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 308; Taylor Branch, \textit{Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-63} (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 59.

\textsuperscript{233} \textit{Catalogue, 1922-1923, and Announcement of Courses 1923-1924}, 77.

\textsuperscript{234} The “Alumni Report of the State Normal School, Montgomery, Alabama” was produced as early as 1901, which indicated that an alumni association had been actively supporting the institution since its relocation to Montgomery. Between 1909 and 1911, \textit{The Alumni Reporter} was published monthly by the Alumni Association. See booklets and periodicals referencing the monthly volumes of \textit{the Alumni Reporter}, SG 11965, Folder 14, ADAH. William Beverly was an active president of the Alumni Association during his presidency. See “William Beverly,” unpublished paper, n.d., circa 1920, box ASU Presidents, ASU Archives.

\textsuperscript{235} \textit{Catalogue of the Faculty and Students For 1924-1925 and Announcements of Courses for 1925-1926}, (Montgomery, Ala.: Paragon Press, 1924), 101.

\textsuperscript{236} Ibid.
African Americans throughout the state and set the high standards for teacher education for African Americans in Alabama. As State Normal School grew, more students qualified for the college-level program. The student teachers in the senior high school and college were exposed to expert curriculum and teaching methods and concepts. By the mid-1920s, the “serious effort” that Trenholm had made to establish a “college” for professional teacher education paid off. Education scholar Felton Clark observed in his 1934 study of state-supported teacher-training programs for African Americans that not only had “the number of graduates from state institutions devoted to training Negro teachers” increased from 209 in 1900 to 1,344 in 1925, but there was an increase in the quality of enrollment.” Students from these state institutions “were increasingly better prepared to do work on the collegiate level,” W. A. Robinson observed. Clark contended that institutions such as State Normal in Montgomery had carved a name for itself producing “valuable” Black leaders. State Normal served as a paradigm for African American teacher education in Alabama.

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238 Clark, Control of State-Supported, 24, 27.
240 Clark, Control of State-Supported, 31.
241 In 1921, “A service-relationship between the State Department of Education and the State Normal School and a coordinated leadership-concentration of the all-year teacher-education program for Alabama’s Negro teachers” was implemented, which established the teaching methods of State Normal as a model for teaching in the state. The “large and majority percentage of Alabama’s Negro teachers” were taught by State Normal School, and thus inspired by the model of teaching and curriculum methodologies at State Normal. There was “a non-competitive administration of the teacher-education program for a majority of Alabama’s Negro teachers.” The State Normal School became “the largest summer school for Negro teachers in the United States”; the summer school education and certification program providing the majority of certified public teachers in Alabama. The State Normal School served as a strategically influential institution to the state’s public school program. “The vast majority of the teachers of Alabama’s Negro public schools [had] secured their pre-service training and continue[d] their in-service training at this institution [ASC].” H. C. Trenholm, “Report to Alabama State Board of Education,” 35, 37. Also see E. P. Wallace, “City’s Negro Prep Schools Belatedly Begun in 1934,” Montgomery Advertiser October 30, 1966.
Unfortunately, on August 3, 1925, George Washington Trenholm died at the age of fifty-four.242 Once again, the state board of education and State Normal School’s trustees had to make a decision to replace the institution’s leadership. G. W. Trenholm’s son, Harper Councill Trenholm, had worked alongside his father since 1921. He had attended Morehouse College, which was considered among the finest Black liberal arts colleges of the period, and had earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1920 and a Bachelor of Philosophy degree in 1921. Upon completing his undergraduate education, Trenholm junior joined his father at State Normal School as instructor and Assistant Director of the Summer Institute. He eventually took over as Director of the Extension Program, while maintaining his teaching responsibilities, and served as administrative assistant to his father. He also continued his education at Morehouse College, earning his Master of Arts degree in 1925. Qualified and experienced as he was, the Superintendent of the State of Alabama Department of Education, John W. Abercrombie, appointed Harper Councill, the son of the successful George Washington Trenholm, as “acting president” in 1925.243

Harper Councill was only twenty-five years old when he accepted the appointment. He was the youngest African American to hold the office of president of an institution for higher learning in the United States. Within a year, H. C. Trenholm positioned State Teachers College Laboratory High School at the vanguard of the accreditation battle for African American high schools and placed the high school on the national stage.


Chapter V
HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF ALABAMA STATE COLLEGE AND LABORATORY HIGH SCHOOL, THE “HEART” OF THE INSTITUTION

Harper Councill Trenholm: “Slowly and Cautiously” Influencing Secondary Education

The aim of this study is to begin to understand the role of Black laboratory schools, 1920 through 1960, through an examination of Alabama State College Laboratory High School. To do that, it is essential to examine H. C. Trenholm’s contributions to Black education in the South. “The history of State Teachers College is, in a real sense, the story of one man—Harper Councill Trenholm,” declared Levi Watkins, the sixth president of Alabama State University.¹ The laboratory high school was with Trenholm at every crossroads of educational change, consistently representing a “Class A” high school. Its pupils and teachers reaped the benefit of Trenholm’s initiatives, through simple exposure or through active engagement as central players. By tracing Trenholm’s leadership and impact on African American education, within the context of the extraordinary challenges he faced, the portrait of Lab High becomes clearer. From the early days under Trenholm’s leadership in 1925, through the changing circumstances in the 1950s, the history of Trenholm’s Lab High shatters the common historical images of all-Black high schools

as “abysmally poor”² or “invariably inferior to the white schools.”³ In this chapter, Lab High is examined through the lens of Harper Councill Trenholm’s journey as a leader in Black education.

Groomed for the job of president by his father, George Washington Trenholm, the young Trenholm was only twenty-five years old when he was appointed by the board to serve as “acting president” upon his father’s death.⁴ Letters streamed in from influential Black and White leaders throughout the South, commending H. C. Trenholm for the position and encouraging the Alabama State Board of Education and the State Normal School’s trustees to officially appoint the junior Trenholm as president.

Among his supporters was another president of an HBCU, John W. Davis, of West Virginia Collegiate Institute, who wrote to the State Superintendent of Education in Alabama, John William Abercrombie.⁵ Abercrombie was a powerhouse in Alabama politics, having served as an Alabama Representative in the United States Congress, the state superintendent of education, president of the University of Alabama, Solicitor and Acting Secretary in the U.S. Department of Labor, and, ultimately, elected to the office of Superintendent of Education for Alabama. In his recommendation letter to Abercrombie, Davis praised Harper Councill Trenholm’s “excellent training” and conveyed Trenholm’s judgment as an African American

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³Thompson, “Education of and for the Negro,” 493.
⁴“Presidents of Alabama State University,” *Founders Day* (Montgomery: Alabama State University, circa 1982); Watkins, *ASU History*, 46.
⁵John W. Davis was a friend and colleague of George Washington Trenholm and Harper Councill Trenholm. He had also been appointed at a young age, 31, to the presidency of his institution, remaining president for 34 years and enjoying a distinguished career as an educator.
living and working in Montgomery, Alabama. “Like his father,” Davis stated, Harper Councill Trenholm exhibited “common sense and good judgment.”

These were conservative words, carefully chosen for the minds of the White state leadership. It was not a secret among Black educators that states like Alabama made “it its business to make the Negro feel that he [was] inferior and different.” The ideal candidate for the president’s position needed to take full responsibility for the education of Alabama’s Black teachers, while at the same time, demonstrating a clear understanding of Alabama’s social and racial environment. Managing an institution for Black higher education, while respecting the world of white supremacy, would demand the “good judgment” that White leadership was looking for. Trenholm fit the bill. He had teaching and leadership experience at the State Normal School, held a graduate degree from University of Chicago, and was a native Alabamian and son of a proven leader.

Harper Councill Trenholm was the only child of the venerated George Washington Trenholm. Born in Tuscumbia, the young Trenholm enjoyed a “good school career” in Tuscumbia High School, where his father served as principal. Harper Councill was a three-year scholarship winner at Morehouse College, and the youngest in his class of 1920. He was engaged

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6 John W. Davis to Honorable John V. Abercrombie, State Education Department, Montgomery Alabama, 13 November 1925, H. C. Trenholm Papers, box 179-14, file 5, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

7 Specifically citing Alabama (and Mississippi, Georgia, and South Carolina), South Carolina State College historian Lewis K. McMillan, with a B.A. from Howard University, Bachelor of Divinity from Yale University, and Ph.D. from the University of Bonn, Germany, wrote an article in JNE in which he harshly condemned the southern caste system and the ignorance of racism. As hard hitting as this article was, perhaps because it appeared in JNE, it missed White scrutiny and backlash. However, McMillan later (1953), published “a scathing indictment [of South Carolina’s] bigoted whites, and its apathetic Negroes” in a book. As a result, McMillan was fired from his job as a professor of history. See Lewis K. McMillan, “Negro Education as I have Known It.” Journal of Negro Education 8, no. 1 (Jan., 1939): 9-18, 12; “Negro Historian Fired for Attack on South Carolina College System,” The Harvard Crimson, June 17, 1954.

8 The State Normal Courier-Journal 4, no. 9 (July 23, 1926). 2. For a thorough examination of Tuscumbia High School, renamed Trenholm High School, see Morris, Creating Caring.
in multiple extracurricular activities at Morehouse, including member and manager of the selective Morehouse College Glee Club and Orchestra, and served as president of his class in his junior and senior years. He studied at the University of Chicago and earned a Ph.B. degree in 1921, graduating with “Special Honors in Education.” He continued at University of Chicago’s graduate school of education, and for his last three years of study also held teaching and leadership positions at State Normal School in Montgomery. He served as “special assistant to his father,” including director of the “mammoth Summer Quarter” at State Normal, which boasted an enrollment of 1100 teachers. Trenholm “carried a regular teaching program in the High School and Junior College” and was appointed as the Director of the Junior College Division in 1924. In 1925, he earned his M.A. degree in education from the University of Chicago.

Beyond his teaching and leadership experiences at State Normal School, at twenty-five years old, Trenholm had already established himself as a leader in his community and respected professional educator. In addition to serving as Trustee of Selma University, he was a member of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church and a member of its choir. This church also housed the registration office when State Normal first moved to Montgomery. In professional circles, Trenholm was a member of the Alabama State Teachers Association; he served on the Program Committee and was elected the Association’s treasurer. On a national platform, Trenholm had already committed to a “life membership” of the National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools and was “an active member of the National Education Association, and of the National

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11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.
Department of Superintendence.”  Although only twenty-five, he was a perfect fit for the role of president. His youth belied his impressive vitae, which described a professional educator well-suited to assume the role of State Normal School’s presidency.

Accepting the position of President of State Normal School in a speech before the Alabama State Teachers’ Association, H. Councill Trenholm, generously referred to William Paterson as “the pioneer as well as the Apostle of Negro Education in Alabama.” While Trenholm demonstrated good judgment in making this earned public tribute to the school’s White “founding president,” the African American presidents which had followed—William Beverly and his father, George Washington Trenholm—had also been noteworthy.

Beverly had led the institution through the tumultuous years of World War I and the resurgence of extreme racism and violence against African Americans from 1915 to 1920. As white supremacist policy and actions continued to push Black education to the back of the state’s agenda, both Beverly and the senior Trenholm met the challenge by inserting their school in the narrow opening of a teaching institution. Such an institution helped to meet the overwhelming need for “qualified” Black teachers. Because it was specifically designated as an institution for preparing teachers, these leaders pressed through the gauntlet of industrial arts advocates to establish a comprehensive liberal arts curriculum that responded to the wishes of the African American community and reflected the pedagogical approaches of contemporary educational leaders at Teachers College, Columbia University, the University of Chicago, and University of Michigan. Beverly and Trenholm, as educated Alabama citizens, laid down the path on which the school continued for the next forty decades.

The younger Trenholm hit the ground running in his first year as president. He was keenly aware of the latest trends in education and strategies used by “mainstream” progressive

13 Ibid.
14 H. C. Trenholm, Yearbook of the Alabama State Teachers’ Association, 1931 (Montgomery: State Teachers’ College, 1931), 68.
educators. Accordingly, Trenholm adjusted his course to address the complexities and complications that Black educators faced within America’s racial realities and differing interpretations of democratic freedoms. The most pressing issues Trenholm tackled were: funding, as he struggled to keep a state funded school on its feet; communication concerns, as he tried to reach Black teachers throughout the South to inspire and challenge them to greater heights; professionalization of Black teachers, as he tried to improve the level of professionalism of Black educators throughout the South; curriculum and teaching methodologies, as he introduced the “best” methods employed in the finest White schools in the North and South by incorporating progressive educational practices in Black schools; Black pride, as he worked to continue infusing Black history and culture in state curricula (not just in Black schools); and the reality of White racism, as he labored to negotiate the deeply ingrained Jim Crow practiced in the South—to teach democratic ideals through education, improve access to contemporary gateways for educational improvement and social uplift, and alter the biased perceptions of African Americans’ abilities based on myth, ignorance, and unbalanced data. H. C. Trenholm battled these issues everyday for the thirty-seven years he was president, from 1925 through 1962. Standing on the shoulders of the State Normal School presidents that came before him, H. Councill Trenholm made history.

Stepping in the office of president in the mid-1920s, Trenholm knew he had to manage the weight of the president’s responsibilities and his aspirations for the advancement of Black education against the increased racial tensions and white supremacist culture of the South. He lived and worked in Montgomery, and while the “Heart of Dixie” certainly had come a long way since the Civil War, sixty years before, Alabamians continued to struggle with respecting, or even acknowledging the notion of African Americans’ equal rights.

In a study conducted in 1922, Alabama was ranked 47th out of 48 states for wealth per educable child (Mississippi was ranked 48th). By 1928, Alabama had fallen to last place.¹⁵

Funding for public education was scarce in Alabama, and certainly what little money there was went first to the state’s public schools for Whites. For example, in Alabama in 1918, out of an expenditure of $4,157,063 for teachers’ salaries, the state appropriated $3,682,314 to White teachers, which translated to $8.10 invested in each White pupil, compared to $474,740 appropriated for Black teachers’ salaries, for an investment of $1.51 per African American pupil. In 1927, the annual salary for Black teachers in Alabama’s public schools was $345, compared to the statewide average of $747.

In 1926, Trenholm’s first year as president, Dr. Lance G. E. Jones of Oxford University toured the Southern United States to study the status of Black education. He found extensive discrepancies in appropriation of public funds for Black and White schooling. Moreover, he observed that “the discrimination in favor of white schools was greatest where Negro population seemed the densest.” Dr. Edward E. Redcay, director of the Slater Fund and author of *County Training Schools and Public Secondary Education for Negroes in the South*, implored that evaluators of Black secondary education “bear in mind the fact that in the allocation of public monies for educational purposes, a discrimination is practiced to the disadvantage of the Negro, which is exceedingly adroit, if not downright dishonest.”

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16 Ibid., 11.
17 *An Education Study of Alabama*, 269.
18 H. C. Trenholm, “Some Background,” 35.
21 Ibid.; Redcay, *County Training Schools*, 17.
In social and political circles, the Ku Klux Klan had reemerged nationally in 1915, with a klavern having opened in Montgomery in 1916. By the mid-1920s, membership in the Klan had reached more than four million throughout the South. In 1926, when Trenholm was in his first year as president of the State Normal School, exalted cyclops Bibb Graves won the election as governor, with the public support of the Klan. Moreover, Graves also served as president of the board of trustees of the State Normal School. Pockets lined with KKK money and touted as a political reformer, the paradoxical governor demonstrated the palpable tension between Alabama’s assumed white supremacist perspectives and the stated commitment to African Americans’ social uplift. As stated in *Alabama: The History of a Deep South State*:

The presence of so many highly trained black ... professionals frightened local whites. In fact, the prospect of aggressive, competent blacks unwilling to accept traditional racial patterns was a specter capable of terrifying Alabama whites for decades to come.... Alabamians would not passively accept any others whom they considered to be “uppity” people or provocateurs. Even folks minding their own business who were in some way strange or alien to Alabama culture provoked reaction during the 1920s.... Racial relations were usually stable when blacks “recognized their place.”

As new educational ideas were causing a stir in the progressive educational centers of the nation such as at Teachers College, Columbia University and the University of Chicago, Trenholm’s strategy was to work cautiously within his southern caste to implement similar advances in Black education, while leading the state’s Black college. It was a high-wire act. To say it was a “dual world” was an understatement. It was a complex racist society in which


25 Ibid., 430.
tensions over remaining in one’s “place” often arose. Seemingly contradictory partnerships and goals developed as Trenholm set his course for educational advancement.

Harper Councill Trenholm was determined to make a difference in Black education. He wanted to increase his lines of communication to Black educators, while also keeping the White board of trustees and state superintendent at arms length. He had long since resolved to employ a program of study that reflected the kind of cutting-edge curriculum and teaching methods that he and members of his “President’s Cabinet” had learned in their graduate programs at the University of Chicago, and through the special graduate teaching institutes and conferences held at Teachers College, Columbia University. This had to be balanced against the efforts of the county training schools and Alabama department of education’s emphasis on industrial arts training for African Americans. His institution was a normal school, and as such, Trenholm defended the advanced pedagogy and course offerings. Trenholm recognized his place as an African American president of an all-Black teachers college in the South and limited influence on African American education in the pursuit of a liberal arts education under the unsympathetic gaze of the state government. He had to be astute, creative, and exceedingly careful.

This was the milieu in which the young Trenholm led his institution. The school’s *State Normal Courier-Journal* captured some of the events and accomplishments of H. C. Trenholm’s role as president and provided a glimpse at the depth and breadth of his responsibilities and engagement in public education, not only within his institution, but in the state, region, and nationally. Descriptions of the regional events held at the institution affirm W. T. B. Williams’s earlier observation of State Normal School’s role as a “social center.”

Perusal of the *Courier-Journal* indicates Trenholm’s effective use of the publication as a trumpet for the institution’s advances in Black education, and on the larger community. While there is no direct evidence that the college’s board of trustees or governor read the *State Normal Courier-Journal*, it is highly likely that Trenholm was aware of his potential audience and the need to educate the board about the effectiveness of his administrative skills. This offered an avenue of communication and opportunity for Trenholm to assure White political leaders that
they had made the right choice in him as president. The comprehensive reporting of the *Courier-Journal* also served as a public record of the institution’s central role in Black education under Trenholm’s leadership. Finally, perusing the descriptions of guest speakers, student achievements, and lyceum events illustrates the respect Trenholm demonstrated for a diverse group of interested participants and his strategy to reach out to elicit “partners” in Black education.

Trenholm’s first academic year as leader of the institution was a full one. The new acting president visited more than a dozen school districts throughout the state of Alabama, and several schools in Maryland and Washington, D.C., with an aim to “serve the institution and cause of education” in the South.26 Presumably, his “observational visits” were intended to assess the shape of Black schooling and to introduce himself and his college. In addition to these somewhat informal visits, Trenholm presented formal addresses on more than twenty “special occasions,” ranging from the “District Conference of Jeanes Supervising Teachers,” to the “National Department of Superintendence annual session,” to the “Alumni Anniversary Program commemorating 25 years of work by Dr. E. L. Thorndike at Columbia University.”27 Trenholm’s objective was to “touch the various outside groups” in an effort to promote his institution, build collaborative opportunities, and advance Black education—a strategy he employed throughout his years as president.

Recognizing the role of the institution as a state teachers college, Trenholm used his school as a stage for welcoming various groups to discuss education, the status of African American education and its challenges and its successes. His high school was open for observation and as a demonstration of best teaching practices, and his senior teaching staff and students were enriched by the opportunities to make “a variety of valuable contacts” and to

26 *State Normal Courier-Journal*, 1926, 12.

27 Ibid.
exchange ideas with other students and teachers. In one “Quarter” alone, Trenholm reported in the *Courier-Journal* the special conferences brought to the campus, which included:

- The 29 county training school principals,
- The 25 Jeanes Supervising teachers,
- The 47 boys and girls clubs for the central Alabama district along with their respective Agricultural and Home Demonstration agents,
- The 72 Montgomery city teachers,
- The 100 Montgomery County teachers and
- Visiting officials form the Jeanes and Slater Funds,
- The General Education Board,
- The Rosenwald Fund, and
- The Alabama State Department of Education, [among others].

This was President Trenholm’s first step toward advancing Black education. Unlike the principal of a lone, community school, Trenholm had a state-wide platform with opportunity to reach a regional and national audience. The idea of using his laboratory high school as a “laboratory of learning” for education in the larger community would become one of the hallmarks of Trenholm’s strategy.

Trenholm also organized major “lyceums” on his campus. Common at Black colleges and universities during this period, lyceums were educational and cultural extracurricular activities or performances offered at Black institutions for higher education. The “lyceum movement” of the nineteenth century was largely dedicated to (White) adult education. While similar to the national lyceum movement, lyceums in the twentieth century held on Black college campuses were an answer to the segregation in the South. In a hostile environment where Black higher education, intellectualism, and advanced learning were frowned upon, the privacy the Black college

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28 Ibid.
29 Ibid., 13.
30 These lyceum programs began under G. W. Trenholm and continued through the decades, welcoming such luminaries as: U. S. President William Howard Taft, George Washington Carver, Dr. Benjamin E. Mayse, Dr. Samuel Nabrit, Dr. John W. Davis, Dr. Horace Mann Bond, Charles H. Wesley, Lorenzo Green, E. Franklin Frazier, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., Honorable Benjamin Hooks, Carl T. Rowan, Honorable Kweisi Mfume, Ralph David Abernathy, Reverend Jesse Jackson, Duke Ellington, Joe Louis Barrow, and Mohammed Ali. See Charles Varner, Jr., “Luminaries and Orators of Renown at ASU” (lecture, Alabama State University, 2001).
campuses provided also allowed unpopular messages and messengers a safe venue for “extracurricular” educational enrichment.

James Weldon Johnson described the Black college campus as a “little world in itself, with ideas of social conduct and of the approach to life distinct from those of the city within which it was situated.” While special guests were not solely African American, for those who were, the lyceums offered African American leaders and celebrities a welcome stage on which to reach their audiences. As promoted at one Black college, “The mission” of a “Lyceum Series” was to “promote and enhance the intellectual, cultural, and aesthetic aspects of student growth and development through a series of outstanding lectures, recitations, concerts, dramas, and exhibitions.”

The “State Teachers College, Montgomery,” so named by 1929, hosted “lyceums” throughout the 1920s through the early 1950s. Special guests would come to the institution and address the students, teachers, and members of the community. When the artist was of wide-known celebrity, Black newspapers picked up the event as newsworthy, not only within the state of Alabama, but in other states as well. For example, the Baltimore Afro-American ran the announcement of the renowned tenor George Garner’s visit to State Teachers College in 1930.

“Alabama Lyceum Hears George Garner” – Appearing as the second lyceum artist of the season and as a feature of the Alumni Homecoming, George Garner, the celebrated, internationally famous tenor, sang in a recital Friday evening at the Alabama State Teachers College and was an instantaneous success from the opening number on his well-arranged programme.


33 The Lyceum’s held at Alabama State Teachers College were announced in Black newspapers throughout the region, as for example: “Alabama Lyceum Hears George Gardner,” The Afro-American, Baltimore, 6 December 1930.

34 Ibid.
Inspecting the list of “artists” and “lecturers” who visited during the 1925-1926 academic year, for example, reveals the diversity of topics and issues in which African American educators and the community were interested. The complete list, as presented in the Courier-Journal, provided an example of the number of “outsiders” who viewed State Teachers College as a stage to educate, launch, and exchange ideas. What might also be inferred from the varied guests was Trenholm’s skill as an ambassador to the world outside the campus and his effort to work collegially with his fellow institutions and educational officials.

Performers
Ada Belle Griffin (Dramatic Reader) Anita Patti Brown (Recital)
Marian Anderson (Distinguished Contralto) Adelaide Herriott (Singer)
The Knoxville College Quartet Thomas H. Johnson (Poet, Scholar)
Frederick d. Hall (Composer, Performer) 24th Infantry Band

Lecturers:
State Director N. C. Newbold, North Carolina
Attorney George S. Vaughn, St. Louis
David D. Jones, Southern Inter-Racial Committee
Dr. R. E. Tidwell, State Superintendent of Education
Director J. B. Hobdy, State Department of Education
Secretary W. F. Black, Montgomery Chamber of Commerce
Field Agents Jackson Davis and L. M. Favrot, General Education Board
Dr. John W. Abercrombie, State Superintendent of Education, President University of Alabama
President John Hope, Morehouse College (former Brown classmate of Beverly)
President E. C. Mitchell, Payne University
President G. L. Word, Miles Memorial College
 Nahum D. Brascher, Associated Negro Press
Student Secretary L. K. McMillan of the Y.M. C. A.
Secretary P. Hodges, State Department of Education
Field Secretary Wigall, Y.W. C. A.
Franklin O. Nichols, Americal Social Hygiene Assn.
Dr. Willis J. King, Gammon Theological Seminary
President T. R. Parker, A.&M. Institute at Normal
Professor Arnold E. Gregory, Talladega College
Director J. S. Sharman, Physical Education
Professor A. S. Plump, Sumter County Training School at Livingston

Among his special guest lecturers were the prominent Alabama politician, attorney, and Superintendent of Education, Dr. John Abercrombie; fellow presidents of other Black colleges and universities such as John Hope of Morehouse College, who was also co-founder of the Niagara Movement and active in the NAACP; and National Education Association (White) colleague, N. S. Newbold.

These lyceums continued throughout Alabama State Teachers College history. The laboratory school students were expected to attend the lyceum along with the college students. “I remember that we would go [to the lyceum], just like the college students,” recalled a 1948 graduate of State Teachers College Laboratory High School. “I remember when Mary [McLeod] Bethune came to speak,” adding, “we would be marched right up front so we could see.”

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37 See also Carl Esco Obermann, *A History of Vocational Rehabilitation in America* (Minneapolis, Minn.: T. S. Denison, 1965), 253.

38 See also *Alabama Official and Statistical Register*, ADAH, 462.

39 Alice Wimberly, in discussion with the author, September 2008/March 2011. Wimberly went on to earn her B. A. in Education from Alabama State Teachers College in 1951, and Masters’ degree from Wilmette, Illinois, and taught for 32 years.
Other extracurricular activities that Trenholm encouraged and reported were the various student activities. Keeping in mind that the high school was not only at the center of the teacher training program, but was also depended upon to produce candidates for higher education, thus the Laboratory High School extracurricular activities were important and managed carefully by Trenholm. These extracurricular activities were often grounded in academics, providing students “well rounded” educational experiences. For example, in 1926, the Social Science Research Society was “composed of honor students of the high school social science classes” who went on enrichment field trips. To encourage students to engage meaningfully and strive for academic excellence, Trenholm announced that “cash prizes were awarded on Commencement Day” to the “students who made the best reports on these field trips.”

The arts were offered as extracurricular opportunities and were also an integral part of high school curriculum. “Special dramatic, oratorical, and musical talents” were displayed by the “Senior High School Dramatic Clubs, while music classes were offered as electives in the academic track.” In addition to the dramatic performances, choral and orchestral recitals were held. Equally important was emphasis on public speaking and rhetoric. “Each senior in High School delivered a declamation before the school Assembly,” which was held in Tullibody Hall. The graduation assemblies included all of the institution’s students, including laboratory school students from kindergarten through senior high school.

Another extracurricular activity that honed public speaking and debate skills was the debating club. Prior to accepting the role of acting president, Trenholm had been one of the faculty advisors of the debating team. To encourage students’ involvement and performance in debating and oratory, the “prized rhetorical contest” was held “during the commencement week,”

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41 Ibid. The Senior High School Dramatic Clubs “produced three creditable plays.”
42 Ibid.
43 Catalogue of Students and Teachers, 1924.
which “featured those who had done the most creditable work in that field.” Students with demonstrated oratory skills enjoyed much celebrity on the college campus.

Historian Monroe H. Little’s study published in *The Journal of Negro History* in 1980, examined extracurricular activities at Black colleges. Little asserted that a debater would often enjoy “star-like” popularity. “Some students achieved a great deal of fame for their oratorical skills,” Little observed, and “enjoyed sizeable followings of loyal and devoted fans.” At State Normal School, this celebration of the most deserving student to earn the privilege of speaking at the commencement ceremonies continued for decades.

At Laboratory High School, it was not only about good public speaking skills, but also proven academic achievement. A Lab High graduate from the 1950s recalled being “so proud” of being selected to present the poem, “I’m proud to be a Negro,” at the graduation observances. In personal interviews with former Lab High students, each one remembered who had been selected in his or her class to present the poem at graduation. This certainly was not the only opportunity for formal presentations; each grade was given various opportunities for recognition. Collected oral histories speak to the level of importance and the “reverence” the students gave to the commencement ceremonies and to the public recognition of their academic performance.

These enriching educational programs at the laboratory high school contradict the myriad articles that appeared about the “sad” condition of Black secondary education. Indeed, in the 1920s, White Southerners had the common perception of the general disadvantages in high schools for African Americans, which were unquestionably deemed inferior. The several hundred year history of African Americans’ oppressed status and the deeply ingrained white supremacist


45 Little, “Extra-Curricular Activities,” 137.

46 Quiester Craig (Lab High graduate, M.B.A., Ph.D., Dean of the School of Business and Economics, North Carolina A&T State University), in discussion with the author, May 2008/March 2012.

practices that had been carefully fostered through centuries of pernicious social relations circumscribed African Americans’ pursuit of advancement through education.\(^\text{48}\)

While the scope of this study does not allow a thorough discussion of the history and cultivation of the “southern caste system” there were distinctive elements of this practice that directly impacted public education. Trenholm set his sights on a strategy to be free of some of these obstacles. Foremost in this tactic was to place his laboratory school in the public eye as a Black high school that could take the public scrutiny and reveal the potentialities of Black secondary education. Although Alabama prohibited Black high schools from being evaluated for accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, Trenholm strategized to ride the wave of progressivism to gain the right for accreditation.

**Accreditation — Realization, Recognition, and Respect**

Prior to being appointed as president of State Teachers College in 1925, Harper Councill Trenholm had served as administrative assistant to his father, and provided oversight of the principal laboratory high school. H. C. Trenholm had known firsthand the quality of secondary education the laboratory school provided. Trenholm was also aware of the Southern regional accreditation associations that had long been established but barred African Americans from membership. Of paramount importance to H. C. Trenholm was to have Black high schools and colleges judged, recognized, and respected for their academic achievements based on the same standards as the all-White high schools. Trenholm wanted to have equal opportunity to earn regional accreditation from the nationally recognized associations.

The decades outside the ring of the nation’s accredited high schools and colleges seriously impeded African American schools being recognized as valued academic institutions. As early as 1895, the first accreditation associations had their beginnings in the North Central section of the

\(^\text{48}\) Gunnar Myrdal discusses “caste” throughout his timeless study. For example, see *An American Dilemma*, 29, 54, 58-60, 69-70, 71, 75, 93-94, 94-96.
nation and spread to the South. By 1917, all regions of the United States had their own accreditation associations intended to build consensus about the standards of the burgeoning American educational system.\(^49\) “Accreditation” inferred a credibility, as affirmed by the associations and entitled the graduates to admission to institutions of higher education.

“From the beginning of the movement in education,” educator Holland Holton stated in 1946, “the central problem sought by standardization was to achieve a definition of what constitutes ‘a good school.’”\(^50\) Holton argued that “the whole quest for definition of ‘a good school’” was based on the average American’s firm belief that “a ‘good school’ [would] prepare [students] for the next higher school ... primary school for the grammar school, and the grammar school for the high school, and the high school for the college.”\(^51\) Many aspects of the school’s program, including staff, facilities, curriculum, services, and student graduation and college entrance rates, were among the criteria for meeting the standards. Each region was distinctive and schools within those regions varied in terms of culture, philosophy, and objectives. However, each school could be judged by a set of agreed upon regional standards that would validate the quality of learning.

By 1913, the “standardizing agencies [had] develop[ed] … their definitions of ‘good schools.’”\(^52\) For the South, the approved list for the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (SACS) was published annually in the *Southern Association Quarterly* and

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\(^{50}\) Holton, “Standards for Secondary Education,” 40.

\(^{51}\) Ibid.

\(^{52}\) Ibid.
considered “very valuable.” SACS claimed that a regional accreditation was “accepted by universities generally in considering the admission of advanced students who [were] interested in continuing their study in post [high school] graduate and professional schools.” The National Advisory Committee on Education stated, in its *Federal Relations to Education Report*, that “the influence of these associations [was] potent throughout the whole country.” Yet Black high schools in the South had not been invited into the circle of accreditation.

Thelma Perry, executive editor of the *Negro History Bulletin*, noted that those students who graduated from accredited high schools were the first to be accepted into the top-rated colleges, whereas “pupils from unaccredited schools were not eligible to enter first-rate colleges” and “where they were admitted, it was on a disadvantaged basis.” Given that segregated schools were prohibited from applying for accreditation, graduates from these schools were perceived as not having had an education “up to standard.”

H. C. Trenholm knew differently. Beginning in 1925, the year he assumed presidency of State Teachers College in Montgomery, Alabama, he began his work to open the possibility of Black high schools earning regional accreditation. Partnering with W. A. Robinson, Supervisor of Negro High Schools of North Carolina and President of the National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools (NATCS) in 1926, Trenholm and Robinson co-authored a letter to the

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53 *Southern Association Quarterly* 1, no. 4 (November 1937), 368; Snively, *Short History*, 69.

54 The Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools was founded in 1895. “The laxity of prevailing standards made such an organization imperative.” The stated purposes of the original organization were: 1) “To organize Southern Schools and Colleges, for cooperation and mutual assistance; [sic] 2) To elevate the standard of scholarship and to effect uniformity of entrance requirements; 3) To develop preparatory schools and cut off this work from the colleges.” See *Southern Association Quarterly* 1, no. 4 (November 1937), 368. For a complete history of SACS, see Snively, *A Short History*.


56 Other regional accreditation associations had evaluated mixed race and all Black schools.

president of the all-White Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, Dr. N. W. Walker, explaining the extremely low number of accredited high schools for African Americans in the South.  

“For ten million Negroes in the Southern States,” Trenholm and Robinson reported, “there are only 166 State accredited high schools” throughout the South.

Exhibit I. Number of State Accredited Negro and White Four Year High Schools in Seventeen Southern States. 1925-1926

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>State-Accredited Four-Year High Schools</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negro</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>900,652</td>
<td>1,447,032</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas 472,220</td>
<td>1,279,757</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>329,487</td>
<td>638,153</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>1,206,365</td>
<td>1,689,114</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>57,925</td>
<td>1,708,906</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>235,938</td>
<td>2,180,560</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>700,257</td>
<td>1,096,111</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>244,479</td>
<td>1,204,737</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>935,184</td>
<td>853,962</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>178,241</td>
<td>3,225,044</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.C.</td>
<td>763,407</td>
<td>1,783,779</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>149,408</td>
<td>1,821,194</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.C.</td>
<td>869,719</td>
<td>818,538</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>451,758</td>
<td>1,885,993</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>741,694</td>
<td>3,918,165</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>690,017</td>
<td>1,617,909</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Virginia</td>
<td>86,345</td>
<td>1,377,235</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total | 9,008,096 | 28,546,899 | 134 | 71 | 205 | 3,904 | 352 | 5,828 | 5 Yes | 6 Yes |

(A) – “Has State Different Standards for Two Races”
(B) – “Is Supervisor of High Schools in Favor of Different Standards”

58 Ibid., 163.
60 Ibid.
Trenholm and Robinson claimed that there were “a few high schools in each of the Southern States” that were “ready and eager to go beyond the standards set by their respective States and to meet the standards of a nationally recognized regional association.”

Among the few high schools to which Trenholm referred was his own laboratory high school, which had been exceeding the state standards and educating students at a level that fully prepared them for college-level work. In 1925 Trenholm was ready for State Teachers College Laboratory High School to be scrutinized by the White accrediting association and recognized for delivering the same high level of schooling as the state’s accredited (White) high schools. It was a bold request.

Trenholm fervently believed that public schools for African American students would benefit from being held to the same standards as White schools. “The measurement of such high schools by exacting objective standards of the Southern Association,” Trenholm wrote to the president of SACS, “would be most stimulating indeed to all of the Black high schools, whether they stand or fall by such measurement.”

While the African American community recognized the high standards at the laboratory schools at Alabama’s State Normal and Talladega College, the “main-stream” White educational establishment did not.

Trenholm and Robinson knew that the membership of the Black national teachers’ association understood that schools that were not accredited were considered subpar and their students were insufficiently prepared for college. Moreover, a different, lower set of standards for

61 Ibid.

62 Brown, “Accredited Secondary Schools”; Williams, “Colored Public High Schools”; Catalogue of the Faculty and Students for 1929-30, 23; “Announcement of Curricula with Description of Courses and Certification Regulations for 1930-31,” 64-65. In 1929, Trenholm reported that the vast majority of his graduates held teaching positions and he counted for those in other professions, including “27 Government Employees,” 31 Physicians, 15 Clerks and Secretaries, 13 Ministers, 8 Farmers, 7 Dentists, 6 Lawyers, 6 Insurance Agents, 5 Nurses, 4 Social Service Workers, 2 Builders and Contractors, 2 Librarians, and 2 Journalists. Catalogue of the Faculty and Students for 1929-1930, 23.

63 H. C. Trenholm and W. A. Robinson to N. W. Walker, President Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, N.C., 18 November 1926.
the “special needs of the Negro” did students no favors. Using unequal standards was consistent with the separate and unequal practices in the South, offering a lower standard of education in schools for African Americans. It reflected the caste-like status of African Americans in the South. In addition to a disadvantaged educational experience, which often included deficient buildings, schools materials, and insufficiently trained teachers, this also meant that the lack of accreditation did little to assist those high school graduates in gaining entry to the institutions of higher education. In fact, it helped to label a school as inadequate.

Robinson sent a memorandum to the NATCS membership lambasting the South’s “general public policy with regard to Negro schools.” He contended that establishing quality high schools was vital to the future success of “the race.” He declared that the current state of affairs for African American education was unacceptable, and he condemned the practice of prohibiting Black schools from being evaluated. “Such a public policy [was] inevitably creating in the South a vast, defenseless, exploitable group; a social cesspool of ignorance, disease, and crime, and social problems, of all kinds,” Robinson argued. His data showed that in “each of the twelve states” where school officials were bemoaning the inadequate facilities provided for White students, “there [were] more State accredited 4-year high schools for white children than the combined number for Negro children [in high schools] in the entire 16” Southern states.

Trenholm argued that “the big motive for accreditation [was] that of insuring adequate conditions of study for high school pupils,” whether or not all of the students intended to enter

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64. Robinson, Trenholm, and Davis were among the most outspoken regarding this point. Robinson authored most of the published articles, as he served as president of NATCS during this period (and was associated with a privately funded school). Trenholm provided substantial research for the published reports. See the H. C. Trenholm Papers, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University. For a discussion of history and objectives of the accreditation journey for African American schools, see Robinson, “Some Problems.”

65. W. A. Robinson, President National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools, memorandum to NATCS Members, 1926.

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid.
He observed that the number of accredited White high schools had steadily increased as a result of the accreditation process. The evaluating committee reports would reveal aspects of a high school program that might otherwise have been missed in facilities, staff, faculty, and/or curricular offerings. Once identified, schools and communities could attend to whatever improvement was necessary to earn accreditation.

Trenholm pointed out that just as the White high schools improved once an evaluating committee provided specific feedback, so, too, would the Black schools. He noted that “in the bi-racial situation, standardization and accreditation should be expected to be a decidedly stimulative influence in the provision of better facilities at a more rapid pace than would otherwise be the case,” adding “for such has been the experience and good fortune of many white high schools.”

At a time when there was increased standardization across the nation and when accreditation associations held significant power to bring credibility to high schools, Trenholm and his partners in education across the Southern region were determined to have their schools evaluated, measured, and recognized for their “Class A” education. Laboratory schools could stimulate other schools to emulate their practices and achieve regional and national recognition.

Trenholm and Robinson’s campaign in NATCS was successful. The resolution was passed at the 1926 meeting at Hot Springs National Park, and Trenholm happily announced that “the attitude of the Department of High School Education, in ... the N.A.T.C.S. is concurred.”

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69 Ibid.


It is our sentiment that more serious effort should be given to the accreditment of high schools for Negroe\s. The same thorough techniques of rating should be applied to high schools for Negroe\s as is applied to other high schools. The cursory examination and approval of vague “Negro standards” should not be practiced in any instance. We urge that the standards for rating high schools for Negroe\s be identical with those used for white students. Stiff standards are necessary if we are to insure continuous progress in our high schools. We should not countenance any lowering of the standards which have been found desirable and acceptable for the recognized high schools.

As a subordinate phase of this topic, we might indicate that these identical standards should apply to all the items considered in the rating of any high schools. The course of study, building facilities, teaching equipment, size of a student body, ratios of students to teachers, teaching load, certificates and academic qualification of faculty and administrative officers—all these items should be appraised on exactly the same basis for high schools for negroe\s as for the other accredited high schools in each state.

As another subordinate phase of this topic of identical standards, we recommend that the present difficulties be met by setting up certain classes of high schools rather than making a lower standard temporarily in order to take care of the present status of many high schools for Negroe\s in each state. By making the standards for a Class A high school identical with those for other accredited high schools in the given state and then setting up graded standards for such lower-classed high schools (b, c., etc.) the high schools can be definitely graded on classes similar to that being employed now by several agencies in the rating of colleges.\textsuperscript{73}

With official affirmation from NATCS, Trenholm persevered in his efforts to collaborate with SACS and convince the organization to allow Black schools to be evaluated. He sent letters to SACS in 1926, 1927, and 1928 about the issue of Black school accreditation. In addition, Trenholm continued to communicate with the NEA. In each communication, he stated that he was not asking for membership in the all-White organization, but for permission for the Black schools to be evaluated using the same SACS standards as those used for White schools. Collaborating with both White and Black professional educators, Trenholm suggested a “broad basis of interpretation which would permit [accreditation] without membership.”\textsuperscript{74}


\textsuperscript{74} Perry, History of ATA, 174.
Finally, in 1928, NEA approved the formation of a “special committee,” chaired by Dr. John Henry Highsmith of the North Carolina Department of Education. NEA member J. Henry Highsmith, a representative of the General Education Board and the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, was a firm believer in the power of accreditation to standardize the quality of education in all areas of the nation and for all children. The committee included three (White) education professionals, Dr. J. Henry Highsmith, Dr. H. M. Ivey, and Dr. Theodore Jack Dean of Emory University. Also part of this special committee were three representatives of the “Association for the Promotion of Education for Negro Youth”: President H. Councill Trenholm of the State Normal School of Montgomery, Dr. M. W. Adams of Atlanta University, and Dean S. H. Archer, Morehouse College. Dr. A. J. Klein was also appointed to the committee. Klein had recently completed his comprehensive Survey of Negro Colleges and Universities, sponsored by the U. S. Bureau of Education. As chair of the Committee on Negro Schools, Highsmith was responsible for Black high school and college accreditations. The “Committee on Approval of Negro Schools” became known as the “Highsmith Committee.”

As part of Trenholm’s strategy to obtain the right to regional accreditation for colleges and secondary schools, he had proposed to the General Education Board that it help sponsor a study on Black Schools and was successful in obtaining funds to support the study. Ultimately it was this strategy of research and alliance building that proved successful.

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75 Dr. A. J. Klein, Bureau of Education, Washington, D.C., conducted a comprehensive study in 1928, which, according to D. O. W. Holmes, was far better received than the Jesse Jones study of 1917. In the study, Klein argued the interdependence of elementary, high school and higher education for proper teacher education and social uplift. See A. J. Klein, Bureau of Education, The Survey of Negro Colleges and Universities, no. 7, 1928 (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1929), v, 964. Also see Arthur J. Klein, “The Federal Government and Negro Education: A Critical Summary,” in “The purpose and Scope of the Seventh Yearbook,” Journal of Negro Education 7, no. 3 (July 1938): 463-467. As part of Trenholm’s strategy to obtain the right to regional accreditation for colleges and secondary schools, he had proposed to the General Education Board that it help sponsor a study on Black Schools and was successful in obtaining funds to support the study. Trenholm, collaborating with the presidents of Atlanta University and Morehouse College, contacted the Bureau of Education in Washington D.C., eliciting the help of Arthur J. Klein to conduct the study. Ultimately it was this strategy of research and alliance building that proved successful.

Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, described the Black educators’ “hopeful” response and the conference “atmosphere filled with eagerness for a constructive next step.”

The Committee devised a procedure whereby African American institutions would be permitted to be inspected and earn either a “Class A” or “Class B” rating. A “Class A” rating signified that all of the standards of the accrediting association had been met. Standards established for the high schools were the same as the standards used for White schools. A “Class B” rating indicated that while the institution was unable to meet the full standards, it still demonstrated a general academic quality that met the principal standards.

The “joint commission” of NATCS and SACS members organized a high school reviewing team, and a select number of Black high schools were reviewed. Trenholm’s Alabama’s State Teachers College Laboratory High School was among the first to be reviewed in 1929 and was the first Black public high school in the state to earn “Class A” regional accreditation from SACS, setting an example for Alabama. This meant that Lab High School was among the select few high schools influencing secondary schools throughout the South as a model of a “good” high school. Among the charter members in the eleven-state region that earned SACS accreditation was another Alabama laboratory high school, Drewry Practice School, the on-campus school at Talladega College, under the leadership of its president, W. D. Gray.

In 1931, at the Thirty-Seventh Annual Meeting of the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, the announcement was made to the full membership that twenty Black high schools had earned SACS accreditation. Arthur D. Wright, the designated Executive Agent

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77 Cozart, History of the Association, 2.

78 Lab High was the first public high school for Blacks in Alabama to be evaluated by SACS and among four announced in 1931 as having earned SACS accreditation. See Snavely, Short History, 66; Proceedings of the Thirty-Seventy Annual Meeting of the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, 40; Holton, “Standards for Secondary Education,” 40.

79 Cozart, History of the Association, 3.
for the “Committee on the Approval of Negro Schools,” made the report. There had been “131 high schools that, in their [own] opinion, might be considered for rating.”\textsuperscript{80} Wright emphasized that “all of these high schools were invited to make application for rating.”\textsuperscript{81} Of the thirty-six that “returned properly filled out forms,” twenty schools announced at the meeting were those that ultimately had earned accreditation.\textsuperscript{82} Ten of the schools spread out over the eleven-state SACS region were laboratory schools associated with institutions for higher education.\textsuperscript{83} Acknowledging Trenholm’s insistence for equal measurement, Wright pronounced, “In submitting this report and recommendations, I wish to state that the standards of the Southern Association have been ... maintained at all times.”\textsuperscript{84} At the December 1, 1932 SACS meeting held in Montgomery, Alabama, H. C. Trenholm modestly stated that African American educators’ collaboration with SACS had proved “fruitful.”\textsuperscript{85}

Speaking to both White and Black audiences, Trenholm pronounced that an accreditation by the regional association served as a “form of official appraisal” that used “mutually approved standards” replacing the “old system of admissions by examination.”\textsuperscript{86} Trenholm quoted the \textit{U.S. Office of Education Bulletin} to clarify for his diverse audience what “an accredited secondary school had come to mean” (emphasis in original): “A school which is equipped to prepare students for colleges requiring 15 units for unconditioned admission and which has been investigated or approved for this purpose by one of the following agencies: A state officer of

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\textsuperscript{80} \textit{Proceedings of the Thirty-Seventh Annual Meeting of the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools} (Birmingham, Ala.: Premier Printing Co., 1932), 40.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid. See Appendix D for a complete listing of the accredited schools.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{85} H. Councill Trenholm, “Accreditation of the Negro High School,” 34.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 34.
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education, a university or college inspector or committee on admissions, an officer or committee of an accrediting association.”\textsuperscript{87} Marking the achievement, Trenholm underscored the point that students graduating from accredited high schools were now “entitled to all the privileges and opportunities accruing from such recognition.”\textsuperscript{88}

The twenty “A” rated high schools and handful of Black colleges that had earned full “A” accreditation from SACS formed the “Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for Negroes.” The twenty schools were considered the “Negro branch” of SACS and continued to work with the Highsmith Committee for sixteen years.\textsuperscript{89} Of course, among these schools were State Teachers College Laboratory School, Montgomery, Alabama, and nine other laboratory high schools.\textsuperscript{90} This marked a new chapter for Black secondary school education.

With the position that came with being part of a college or university, the laboratory high schools were recognized as important leaders in secondary education. As one Black college president and leader of an on-campus high school stated soberly, “We are not unmindful of our urgent opportunity to influence world thought in education.”\textsuperscript{91} It was a powerful position, but a tenuous one—the paradox of progressive Black education in the South. Located on the campuses of colleges charged with preparing qualified Black teachers, these laboratory schools enjoyed an autonomy that many community high schools could not. They were at the heart of teachers

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 35.

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{89} High schools for African Americans continued to be listed separately by the Association until 1964, a full ten years after \textit{Brown v. Board of Education}, which ruled that segregated schools were constitutionally illegal. SACS maintained a separate list of accredited Black higher education institutions through 1959. See Charles H. Thompson, “The Southern Association and the Predominantly Negro High School and College,” \textit{Journal of Negro Education} 21, no. 2 (Spring 1962): 105-107. Also for a timeline of major events of SACS see Cozart, \textit{History of the Association}.


\textsuperscript{91} Dr. John W. Davis, President, West Virginia State College, address to the National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools, 1931, as cited in Perry, \textit{History of ATA}, 245.
colleges and played a central role in producing future leaders. Echoing themes of “social reconstructionism,” Robinson, who became the director of the Atlanta University Laboratory High School, declared, “We in the Negro school must be courageous enough to arouse social unrest and lively dissatisfaction with things as they are.” He also encouraged his fellow Southern educators to “be intelligent enough to help our children to become socially wise.”92 This power and responsibility to influence education was also noted by Felton Clark, future director of the Southern University Laboratory High School. In his study, The Control of State-Supported Teacher-Training Programs for Negroes, Clark concluded that the African American institutions’ directors and the reach of their laboratory high schools were a proven and valuable influence.93

In study of Black accredited secondary schools, Aaron Brown’s research similarly stated that laboratory high schools were not only excellent high schools, but also were attentive to their leadership roles and responsibilities to influence Black education for social uplift. In “An Evaluation of the Accredited Secondary Schools for Negroes in the South,” Brown found that there was a “wide diversity in levels and patterns of excellency on the part of the [accredited] schools.”94 He discovered that the “schools connected with institutions of higher learning score[d] considerably higher than others.” Particularly in the categories of “library, instruction, outcomes, and staff,” the laboratory high schools outpaced the other accredited Black high


93 Clark, Control of State-Supported, 113.

Brown concluded that the laboratory schools positively influenced other high schools, citing their “wholesome effect upon others in the areas” under evaluation.  

Still, there was much work to be done, and Trenholm and his institution stayed in the thick of it. In 1930-1931, there were 1,150 public high schools for African Americans living in the South, serving more than 1,000,000 high school age students 15 to 19 years. Of those, only twenty had earned a “Class A” accreditation from SACS. By 1933-1934, the *Statistics of the Education of Negroes* reported that the number of public high schools for African Americans had doubled to reach 2,305. Most of the segregated public school systems fell under the SACS purview, which proved in some states a particularly challenging group from which to earn accreditation. Aaron Brown noted in his 1944 study, “It seems that schools for Negroes in some states have to be better than those for whites in order to get the approval of the Southern [accrediting] Association.” In a report issued by H. C. Trenholm as Executive Secretary for Alabama State Teachers Association, by 1935-1936 there were nine “Class A” accredited (public and private) high schools for African Americans in the state of Alabama. An additional seven were “accredited fully by the State Department of Education,” but had yet to meet the higher standards for SACS accreditation. The State Teachers College Laboratory High School, Montgomery, remained the only accredited Black high school in Montgomery through 1937.

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95 Ibid., 197, 200.


Trenholm, Robinson, and others continued to work to help schools understand and appreciate the standards and benefits of regional accreditation. Throughout the South, by the end of the 1930s, there were ninety-one segregated Black high schools that had earned regional accreditation from three of the nation’s accreditation associations. This included eighty-three high schools by 1936 accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, six accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, and two by the North Central Association.

While “all of the educational criteria” had been met by those schools that had earned a “Class A” SACS accreditation, they were still excluded from SACS general membership. After centuries of de rigueur marginalization of African Americans, allowing African Americans access to SACS membership was too much of a stretch for White southerners. Complete membership for Black schools would not be accomplished for another thirty-two years. It wasn’t until 1961 that the “anachronistic practice” of keeping a separate list of accredited Black schools ended and African Americans were given full membership in the association.

With Laboratory High School in place as an example of excellent curriculum and teaching methods, Trenholm worked to further develop the college program, with an aim to bring the Normal School to a four-year degree-granting “teachers college.” The ever-present hurdle was

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100 Laboratory Schools often held workshops for teachers to promote curriculum and teaching methods that would reach regional standards and commend administrative approaches to school management. Trenholm also continued to appeal to the Alabama state board of education to “induce the school authorities of Montgomery to provide opportunity for senior high school instruction for Negro pupils living in the city of Montgomery, the second most populated city in the state”; H. C. Trenholm Report to Alabama State Board of Education, 1938.

101 Generally sixteen states are considered as the “Southern states”: Eleven states fall under SACS, two states under the Middle States Association, and three under the North Central accrediting association.

102 The Middle States Association had accredited the six schools by 1933. See Walter G. Daniel, “National Activities and General Progress,” *Journal of Negro Education* 6, no. 2 (April 1937): 225-240, 239; see also Knox, “Historical Sketch,” 452-453; Redcay, *County Training Schools*, 54.

inadequate funding from the state. Undaunted, just as the institution’s presidents before him, Trenholm endeavored to raise the level of the institution.

In 1928, the Alabama State Board of Education authorized a name change from State Normal School to State Teachers College at Montgomery to recognize the college level of education that was being provided. Accordingly, they authorized the awarding of the Bachelor of Science degree to its college division graduates. In 1930 Trenholm opened the Nursery-Kindergarten program as part of his pre-K through twelve Laboratory School. The Nursery-Kindergarten Laboratory School was one of only five in the nation under the supervision of a college or university and part of its core teaching program. In 1931, State Teachers College awarded its first B. S. degree.

Unfortunately, Trenholm’s Teachers College did not earn accreditation from SACS during the first round of accreditation evaluations for colleges in the 1930-1931 academic year. Upon review by the association, the college did not meet the mark for college-level standards. Among the offenses that kept his institution from earning SACS accreditation was an insufficient number of books in the library, a common “problem” with ill-funded all-Black public schools. It was not until 1935 that State Teachers College earned a “Class B” accreditation, and the “Class A” accreditation was not awarded until 1943, much to the frustration of Trenholm. Still, Trenholm leveraged himself and his laboratory school to increase the number of accredited colleges and high schools.

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104 Watkins, ASU History, 59.

105 Charles H. Thompson, “Some Critical Aspects of the Problem of the Higher and Professional Education for Negroes,” Journal of Negro Education 14, no. 4 (Autumn 1945): 509-526, 518. The only “Negro College” that earned the full “Class A” accreditation in the first year that higher education institutions were inspected was Fisk. Only four more colleges joined the “A” list by 1932: Atlanta University, Morehouse College, Spelman College, and Hampton Institute (all private colleges). For further discussion of the dearth of well-stocked libraries for African Americans, see John Mark Tucker, Untold Stories: Civil Rights, Libraries, and Black Librarianship (Champaign, Ill.: Publications Office, Graduate School of Library Information Science, 1998), 23-46; Allison M. Sutton, “Bridging the Gap in Early Library Education History for African Americans: the Negro Teacher-librarian Training Program (1936-1939),” Journal of Negro Education 74, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 138-150.
Partnerships for Advancement

H. C. Trenholm believed that all teachers, regardless of race, had much in common with their responsibilities to educate the future generations. While the NEA focused primarily on initiatives in White education, its influence in politics and educational policy was impressive. The parallel Black teachers association, the National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools (NATCS), shared the goal of appropriately preparing its teachers to meet the needs of a changing American society. To that end, Trenholm was instrumental in strengthening the relationship between the NATCS, “the most prestigious African American educational organization of the period,” and the NEA, “the most powerful teachers’ association in the nation.”¹⁰⁶ In his role as head of the High School Division of NATCS, Trenholm sought “advice” and support to solve the “special problems” of African American education.¹⁰⁷ His work with the NEA and NATCS partnered with other leadership responsibilities and projects, such as executive secretary of ASTA, executive council member of ASNLH, and the Works Progress Administration, renamed Works Project Administration in 1939, one of the “New Deal agencies.”

While each of Trenholm’s initiatives related to one another (as in the achievement to get Black schools accredited), each was also distinctive and marked a major step in advancing Black education. Whatever Trenholm was involved in, so too was Lab High in some fashion. A review of Trenholm’s leadership helps to illuminate lab school’s role in education for African Americans.


¹⁰⁷ National Education Association Addresses and Proceedings of the Sixty-Sixth Annual Meeting Held at Minneapolis, Minnesota, July 1-6, 1928 66 (Washington, D.C.: The National Education Association, 1928), 1045. In response to Trenholm’s request, the joint committee made annual reports. See “Report of Committee to Cooperate With the National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools,” in National Education Association of the United States Proceedings of the Seventy-Fourth Annual Meeting Held in Portland, Oregon June 28 to July 2 1936 74 (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association), 856. A report of the textbook project was given, with Mabel Carney from Teachers College, who had conducted a workshop at Lab High; U. W. Leavell, author of several published studies of Black education research and textbooks in the classroom; A. C. Payne, Principal of Lab High; and H. Councill Trenholm, President of State Teachers College, Montgomery.
These initiatives overlapped in time sequences thus, a linear view or chronological narrative of State Teachers College, Montgomery, and its laboratory high school would be difficult to present. Perhaps it is helpful to imagine the historical portrait of the State Teachers College and its laboratory high school as a multi-layered transparency—each layer representing a distinctly important contribution. While each may be examined individually, when layered together, the multi-faceted and central role that the laboratory high school played in influencing the future direction of Black education while under Trenholm’s leadership becomes clearer.

The NEA and NATCS

In 1926, largely in response to Trenholm’s efforts, the NEA sanctioned a joint committee between NATCS and NEA to address “Problems in Negro Education and Life.” This finally provided a channel for communication between the NATCS and NEA. In 1928 the Committee was renamed the “Committee to Cooperate with the National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools” and earned a place as a permanent Committee of the NEA Representative Assembly, which included a budget from NEA. The charge of the committee was to study the “problems of Negro education and life through designated subcommittees, and to promote interracial goodwill.” The two organizations exchanged speakers at annual conferences, supported public

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108 “Report of Committee to Cooperate With the National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools,” National Education Association of the United States Proceedings of the Seventy-Fourth Annual Meeting Held in Portland, Oregon, June 28 to July 2 1936, 74 (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1936), 856. “A meeting of the Committee was held in Room 304, Statler Hotel, St. Louis, Missouri, Wednesday, February 26, 1936, at 9 a.m.” Among the members present were: Mabel Carney, U. W. Leavell, A. C. Payne, Arthur D. Wright, Charles S. Johnson, H. Councill Trenholm, John W. Davis, Ambrose Caliver, Leo M. Favrot, and N. C. Newbold. In addition to hearing reports on the textbook project, “Mr. Wright offered the following resolution: ‘That this Committee request the president of the National Education Association to change the name of the committee to the Committee on Special Problems in the Education of Negroes…’ Such a committee shall be in effect a joint committee of members appointed annually by the presidents of the National Education Association and the National Association of Teachers in colored Schools.”

109 Ibid.; Gray, History of ASTA, 80. For further discussion of GEB funding and committee organization see Perry, History of ATA, 216. “Dr. Arthur Wright of Dartmouth College as executive agent … resigned in 1931 and Dr. Fred McCuistion, who was more acceptable to the group, succeeded him.”
radio addresses, and “established … state and local committees on racial relations,” an important part of which was conducting a textbook study to examine if African Americans’ contributions were represented equitably in history and social studies texts. Trenholm proved to be a leader in these initiatives.

Trenholm was elected president of the Alabama State Teachers Association (ASTA), 1931-1933. In 1932, halfway through his term as ASTA president, he was elected president of the NATCS. Trenholm’s triad of presidential responsibilities—State Teachers College, ASTA, and NATCS—while enormous, blended harmoniously to the advantage of each, and certainly to the shared goal of improving education for African Americans. Trenholm later served in the positions of executive secretary for the NATCS in 1938, a position he held for twenty-one years, and research secretary for the ASTA from 1937 to 1959.

**Partnering with ASNLH—Education in African American History and Culture**

As H. C. Trenholm was a member of the NEA-NATCS committee with practical experience as a historian in Black history, he seemed well suited to lead “The Negro History Project.” Trenholm leveraged his position as president of the college and active member of NEA, NATCS, and ASTA to launch a multi-pronged study. The NEA’s directive was to discover if African Americans were given “fair and adequate treatment” in history and social studies texts. At the same time, Trenholm had partnered with friend and colleague Carter G. Woodson, founder of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH), to investigate and


influence the study of Black life and history in schools. With a grant from the GEB Trenholm launched the project in 1930.\footnote{Originally funded by a grant from the GEB, by 1935 Trenholm secured federal funding for the Negro History Project through the Works Progress Administration (WPA), one of the New Deal agencies. It was led by H.C. Trenholm whose research began in the later 1920s as part of the NEA subcommittee to study the education and life of African Americans. See H. C. Trenholm \textit{Report to Alabama State Board of Education}, 22; H. C. Trenholm, \textit{The 1937 Handbook of the Alabama State Teachers Association} (Montgomery: Alabama State Teachers Association through State Teachers College, Montgomery, 1937), n.p. (editor’s note). Trenholm’s work also informed the textbook research of Robert B. Eleazer, Educational Director of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation. See “Teachers College, Columbia University, Lecture on [N]egro Education and Race Relations” (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1931); “Report of Committee to Cooperate With the National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools,” \textit{National Education Association of the United States Proceedings of the Seventy-Third Annual Meeting Held in Denver, Colorado, June Thirtieth to July fifth, 1935}, 73 (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1935), 156-59.}

Trenholm’s efforts with the ASNLH were substantial.\footnote{Trenholm was a regular contributor of research to the efforts of the NAACP and to \textit{Journal of Negro Education}. See H. C. Trenholm, \textit{The 1936 Handbook}, 114. He encouraged his graduate students to conduct field research in an effort to collect accurate data on African American education in Alabama. See Charles Varner, Jr., (lecture, “ASU’s Role in the Struggle for Civil Rights, Alabama State University,” n.d.).} Working with fellow NEA committee member, Carter G. Woodson, Trenholm’s research project on the study of African American history and culture in schools included a detailed analysis of curriculum planning in Black history. Among Trenholm’s stated aims was “developing racial self-respect through a study of Negro life and history.”\footnote{H. C. Trenholm, \textit{The 1936 Handbook}, 7.} Specific goals of the project were:

- The ultimate adoption of Negro history textbooks in all public and private schools.
- The formation of Courses of Study in Negro History.
- A creative expression that will manifest itself in terms of books written by and about Negroes, and in scientific research and investigation.
- A more tolerant relationship between the races of the world.
- A Negro proud of his contributions to ancient and modern civilization and of his place in the family of races.

Trenholm sent questionnaires to scores of Black educators to determine if and how they incorporated Black history and culture in their curriculum. As part of his research, Trenholm

\footnote{Ibid., 22.}
invited his graduate students to conduct field investigations. They looked at how many schools offered specific credit courses that would “evidence ... that the Negro youth [was] getting a keener appreciation of himself.” Among the 25 percent that did was State Teachers College Laboratory High School.

Taking successful lesson-models created for his laboratory school, Trenholm prepared “study kits” that promoted the “Negro’s contribution to American life and culture” and distributed them throughout Alabama, using the ASTA network. “As a result,” Jerome Gray reported in his History of the Alabama State Teachers Association, “black schools began to hold annual Negro History Week programs, initiate essay and oratorical contests devoted to Negro themes, and feature Negro life and history themes in school plays and bulletin boards.” Additionally, as Lab High teachers had been exercising a discriminating eye regarding which texts they used in their classes, Trenholm encouraged them to take action to “promote the truth” of African American history and culture by organizing community committees, appealing to the local board of education, join the ASLNH and encourage others to do so, and especially implement a classroom program for the celebration of Negro History Week.

Emphasizing the need for a robust collection of works on the Black experience, Trenholm’s research reported the number of books in each school’s library. State Teachers College Laboratory High School was listed in the top 20 percent. Trenholm constructed a comprehensive list of studies on African American history and culture, which he organized into a historiography and included in his reports as “Suggestive Materials for a Program for the Celebration of Negro History Week.” Creating a dozen broad topics such as “The Negro in

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116 Ibid.
117 “State Teachers College in Review: A Founder’s Day Statement for 1939,” 1.
119 Ibid., 25.
Business,” “The Negro Poet,” and “The Negro Educator,” Trenholm not only listed the books, but also referenced specific pages or chapters that would benefit the students the most.120

Trenholm had implemented these goals in his own laboratory school at State Teachers College and was determined to see a similar program in schools throughout Alabama and the South. While ASC Laboratory High School did not have the funds to supplement its classroom library, students were “always expected to purchase the books” on their own.121 “We didn’t just study Negro history during Negro history week; it was a part of our curriculum all the time,” remembered a former Lab High graduate.122

Trenholm’s findings were included in the report to the NEA at the 1933 convention in Chicago. His extensive research in the state of Alabama was officially presented at the 1936 Annual ASTA convention and published in a full report in the ASTA’s annual Handbook in 1936.123 His research continued until 1959, and in his role as executive secretary for the NATCS, Trenholm published annual comprehensive data reports on African American education in The Bulletin for twenty-one years.

Always aiming to build bridges and nurture collaboration, Trenholm included in his report the White higher education institutions that he stated had done “remarkable work in the field” of interracial research and studies. Trenholm particularly highlighted “the University of North Carolina, standing well out in front.”124

120 Ibid., 25-27, 32-44.
121 Richard Jordan (Lab High graduate and life-long teacher), in discussion with the author, September 2009.
122 Henry Johnson (Lab High graduate, M.D.), in discussion with the author, September 2008/March 2011.
123 The 1936 Handbook.
124 Ibid. Other schools that were leaders in interracial studies which Trenholm included in his written report were Peabody College, Duke University, University of Virginia, North Carolina College for Women, and Sam Houston State Teachers’ College.
State Teachers College and Laboratory High School as Hosts

The Alabama State Teachers Association, founded by State Teachers College president William Burns Paterson, was headquartered in Montgomery and held its annual meetings at State Teachers College. By 1949 Trenholm had helped expand the Black teachers association to “more than 6,500 members of the 7,000 teachers working in Negro schools of various levels and types in Alabama.” Trenholm stated that in his role as “research secretary,” he depended on the “professional and clerical associates (both staff and student) at Alabama State College for Negroes” to assist him with his projects. Trenholm, with the support of staff and students, researched, organized, and produced reams of detailed data on Black education in Alabama. These data were discussed and distributed at the annual meetings.

The Lab High teachers and students had the opportunity to participate in some fashion in these major conferences and, in certain instances inspired and influenced the hundreds of visitors that came through its doors. For example, teachers from the laboratory school prepared *A Handbook of Professional Inspiration for Teachers* based on their class instruction plans and experiences, as well as their program for parent and community involvement. The *Handbook* and the program included presentations by the student teachers and high school students, such as examples of the current unit of study and poetry and singing performances.

Alabama State Teachers College hosted the state debating competition in which laboratory high school seniors participated. The state debating competition was a major event in the lives of the high school and college students. The regional winner was awarded “a scholarship to the college of his choice” for “the entire four college years for a customary total grant of $1000.”

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125 H. C. Trenholm “Some Background,” i.
126 Ibid.
winner also earned a “trip to the national finals.” Trenholm reported to the ASTA membership that “Alabama high school graduates [had] profited from these contests.”

Trenholm had started the debating team at the laboratory school in 1924. In 1928, the “regional winner was from Lab High, Mary Alice Ball.” The state of Alabama fared quite well in the regional competitions, as Trenholm reported that “nine Alabama students [had] participated in the regional finals over the nine years, and five of these nine [had] won the $1000 scholarship and as well the trip to the national finals.”

The 1928, 1932, and 1934 regional winners were students from State Teachers College Laboratory High School.

In Trenholm’s 1936 report to the ASTA membership, Trenholm encouraged celebration of those excellent students who would compete in Brooklyn, New York for that year’s nationals. The “ten approved topics for the 1936 national debate” reflected Black educators’ academic emphasis of the period—knowledge of the rights and privileges of the United States Constitution. For example, a few of the authorized debating topics included “The Constitution and Slavery,” “The Constitution and Citizenship,” and The Negro and the Constitution.

Another major event that the college hosted was the “Academic Meet for High School Seniors.” President Trenholm created the meeting as a way not only to “stimulate the work in all the high schools,” but to attract talent to the State Teachers College. The “Academic Meets” continued into the 1960s and were remembered well by a number of former participants.

“Alabama State always had an Academic Meet every year.” recalled Charles Varner, Jr., student

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129 Ibid.
130 Ibid.
131 Ibid.
participant and graduate of Alabama State College. “The top students in the classes got a chance to come from all over the state of Alabama,” Varner stated.\textsuperscript{133}

They came and competed in math, science, chemistry, physics and all of that. They had bus-loads of people come from ... all around. It was the magic that Trenholm had. He had the ability to propel people together from all across the state of Alabama.... He was all about advancing education and he created all kinds of programs to get people back to Montgomery ... to promote education and ... get the top students to come to the campus for these academic meets so he could recruit them.... The Laboratory High School was a perfect example.... Lab High was the best high school education there was.\textsuperscript{134}

Varner’s recollections spoke directly to the point of Trenholm’s leadership and the central role of the institution in African American high school education.\textsuperscript{135}

In 1932, Alabama State Teachers’ College hosted the twenty-ninth annual session of the National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools (NATCS). This was the first of several hosted by Trenholm and his college and laboratory school. After serving as president in 1932, Trenholm was elected as Executive Secretary for the NATCS in 1938, a position he held for twenty-one years. Alabama teachers earned among the lowest salaries in the nation, and yet the state boasted the largest membership in NATCS.\textsuperscript{136}

The 1932 conference theme was “The Teacher of the Negro Child.”\textsuperscript{137} Among the speakers were the State Superintendent of Education for Alabama, Dr. A. F. Harmon, and Horace Mann Bond speaking about the \textit{Journal of Negro Education, 1932 Yearbook}. One major agenda item was the discussion of the study conducted by Dr. Ambrose Caliver, Senior Specialist in the

\textsuperscript{133} Charles Varner, Jr. (ASU Historian, Instructor, and Lecturer), in discussion with the author, March 2011.

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{135} Charles Varner, Jr., “Academic Meet Programs at Alabama State College 1930s through mid-1950s” (lecture, Alabama State University, n.d.).

\textsuperscript{136} Trenholm’s correspondence record with individual teachers is voluminous as he personally coaxed, complimented, and sympathized with teachers throughout the state as they attempted to stretch their meager salaries to pay for pre-service and in-service training and attend summer training institutes.

\textsuperscript{137} H. C. Trenholm, \textit{The 1932 Yearbook}. 
Education of Negroes, U.S. Office of Education, specific to the status of “provisions for secondary education of Negroes as revealed in connection with the national survey of secondary education.”\textsuperscript{138} While there was recognition that “appreciable progress in secondary education for Negroes” had been made in the last decade, a point of concern was the significant gap between provisions for White and Black public secondary education where dual systems of education were maintained.\textsuperscript{139} As hosts, Alabama State Teachers College teachers and students would have been engaged with NATCS members as they grappled with these regional and national issues.

As part of his leadership roles in the ASTA and NATCS/later ATA (NATCS changed its name in 1938 to the American Teachers Association – ATA), Trenholm crafted broadcasting scripts for the American Education Week radio broadcasts, informing the public about the work of the NATCS and its army of 52,000 teachers in all-Black public schools. He also used these broadcasts to emphasize the importance of professional teacher education, certification, and the necessity for ongoing “in-service” training.

Pertaining to his State Teachers College and Laboratory High School, Trenholm reported in a 1939 “radio talk,” “News of the Week at the College,” that as of that current year, the college produced “36.7\% of the 430 principals of high schools and elementary schools” in the state of Alabama, those individuals having graduated from the laboratory high school and/or college division.\textsuperscript{140} Of the “4923 teachers employed in schools in Alabama, three-fourths (76.3\%) had

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\textsuperscript{139} Ibid.
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\textsuperscript{140} H. Councill Trenholm, “Radio Talk,” Station WSFA, April 18, 1939 in “Summary Report of Sixth Annual Statewide Academic Meet for High School Seniors, Conducted April 22, 1939.”
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attended the State Teachers College,” and a portion would have attended its laboratory high school.141

**Triumphs and Trials – Surviving the Great Depression in Southern Education**

Harper Councill Trenholm accomplished these initiatives within the oppressive social environment in Alabama, and under the intense strain of grossly inadequate funding. In addition to his leadership, Trenholm and his staff collected comprehensive data on the state of Black education, which he shared with educators in a variety of formats. In his role as executive secretary and research secretary for the ATA and ASTA respectively, Trenholm published his findings in the ASTA *Handbook* and *Yearbook*, as well as in the NATCS *Bulletin*.142 He included selections from the most “important” studies on Black education nationally along with his own detailed research on the state of Black education in Alabama.

Offering an assessment of the needs, challenges, and possibilities for education of African Americans, Trenholm was ever mindful of his target audience—African American teachers. Examination of Trenholm’s personal correspondence provides a window into the severe challenges he faced and his resulting frustrations and sometimes discouragement. However, a perusal of his more than thirty years of public communiqués—his reports on the college’s growth, his research in Black secondary and higher education, and his analyses on issues concerning Black teachers—revealed a consistently hopeful, forward-thinking educator. In his public reports, Trenholm offered a dual message. He exposed the harsh realities of extreme inequities between Black and White public education and the corresponding underdevelopment of schooling for African Americans. In the same reports, Trenholm encouraged responsible

141. H. C. Trenholm, “News of the Week at the College” WSFA Radio Talk, 1939. The “Summary Report of Sixth Annual Statewide Academic Meet for High School Seniors Conducted Saturday, April 22, 1939,” n.p. 85% of the B. S. degree graduates from ASC were “reported in active teaching service the current year” [1939].

interpretations, along with constructive methods, for advancement, and reasons for celebrating achievements along the way. One might argue that Trenholm was careful, aware of the White Alabama policymakers looking over his shoulder. While that might have been the case and perhaps wise, it can also be said that he was aware of the need to encourage Black educators.

Trenholm’s editorial comments about the research in his reports reflected a balanced approach that he maintained in the Deep South as a leader of a state-supported institution. Any comments from him that implied encouragement of activism in the classroom were never overt. But there is no doubt that Trenholm was out to influence his readers. His selected reports presented the data and national trends he thought would enlighten his constituency.

In the 1949 Association Yearbook, Trenholm reported on the studies that had been conducted on behalf of the U.S. Office of Education, including the “very significant study” that was produced in 1942 as the *National Survey of Higher Education of Negroes*. Produced in four volumes, Trenholm provided a summary of each volume’s objectives. Trenholm highlighted in his ASTA report as particularly important to the future outlook for Black education, the “significant statement” by Dr. Fred J. Kelly.

The many social changes which are rapidly taking place, and the growing complexity of life calls for a corresponding acceleration of the rate of educational progress among Negroes. The criteria by which the progress is to be judged must not be in terms of pre-conceived notions concerning the Negro’s past, his present “place” in society nor in terms of the *status quo*, but rather in terms of his needs as a full-fledged American citizen who is able and willing to accept all the responsibilities and privileges of our democracy.

This excerpt Trenholm selected from the study demonstrated his efforts to inspire teachers through education, realization, and hope. Using the statement by educational researcher Dr. Fred J. Kelly, who held the position of Chief, Division of Colleges and Professional Schools in the U.S. Office of Education, Trenholm encouraged Black teachers to take note of the changing

\[\text{143} \quad \text{H. C. Trenholm, “Some Background,” 40.}\]

society in which they were living, and the recognition that “accelerated progress” for Black education was not only inevitable, but “called for.” He did not lambaste the historical pattern of draconian measures that had been dictated by White policymakers for decades upon decades, but highlighted through this excerpt the progressive idea of African Americans’ rights and privileges as “full-fledged American citizens.” In other words, speaking to the individual Black teacher leading a classroom of future African American citizens, Trenholm encouraged a dual message. First, to be aware that White national education leaders were looking forward to improved Black education; and second, for African American teachers in the South to recognize the changing society in which they were working and to do their part in improving Black education.

Within the state of Alabama, an all-White leadership team led by Edgar W. Knight, University of North Carolina, with R. E. Tidwell, University of Alabama; Gould Beech, Alabama Polytechnic Institute; and State Department of Education representatives R. E. Cammack and E. G. McGehee, Jr., conducted in 1940 “A Study of Higher Education for Negroes in Alabama.” Their stated six-point objective included investigation of “duplications” in Black colleges and collaboration possibilities. They hoped to “recommend programs of service on a graduated scale that [would] adequately, equitably, and economically help in meeting the needs of the Negroes.”

The report included specific findings and recommendations, echoing requests that Trenholm had made in multiple appeals to the Alabama State Board of Education over a number of years. One can imagine that Trenholm might have been frustrated, relieved, and optimistic upon reading the report. He would be frustrated that it took a group of White “outsiders” to raise public awareness about the conditions in Black public education, conditions in which he had been a central player in advancing; relieved that finally there was a White “objective” statement on Black education policy, achievements, and potential; and optimistic that the tide of racism and

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extreme injustices might be turning in favor of education for African American Alabamians, or at least in waning opposition. The findings in the report included statements about responsibilities for funding Black education and recommendations for change.

The theme of “democracy” was a cornerstone in the report. Listed among the pillars for an effective public educational system was the acknowledgment that “under the democratic system of government, education is a definite responsibility of the state.” For Trenholm and African Americans throughout the South historically, this had not been the case; the state had not accepted full responsibility for educating its Black citizens.

Indeed, the state of Alabama had never equitably supported the State Teachers College for Negroes. Trenholm’s report to the association included a review of the pattern of state funding for the state’s Black teachers college. In 1932 “Negro schools received ONE-TENTH” [original emphasis] of the state’s expenditures on schooling, although its educable population represented more than one-third (35.1 percent). The 1930s was the decade of the Great Depression, and Alabama’s economy declined significantly. Among the state institutions hardest hit were the schools for African Americans. Having already been at a great financial disadvantage, by 1932, the college’s financial troubles were extreme, as the state provided only half of the appropriated funds to the college. This caused the faculty members at State Teachers College and its laboratory high school, who were already earning far below their White peers, to go without pay for months. For the academic year 1932-1933, the average monthly salary for White teachers was $83; for Black teachers, it was $43.

146 Ibid.


148 H. C. Trenholm to the State Board of Education, 1932. “Particular note should be taken of the … extreme financial embarrassment … suffered [by the teachers] as a result of our inability to pay them.”

149 Ibid., 25.
Trenholm’s report to the ASTA membership of over 6,000 teachers included more than thirty tables of data, each packed with statistics about Black education in Alabama, and many comparing the information about Black public schooling to the same data on White schooling for a twelve year period. It was a harsh, clear message of a pattern of “pathetically low” funding for Black education—its teachers and schools. However, with each statistic and unabashed comment that described the “disparity and meagerness of relative opportunity for Alabama’s Negro pupils,” Trenholm commented on the “steady progress” that had been made.

This report demonstrated Trenholm’s skill in maintaining balance on the “high-wire” of leading a Black institution in the “Heart of Dixie.” These public findings, although written for the Black teachers association, were available for examination by the White state board of education. What it also demonstrated was Trenholm’s skill in striking a balance between providing helpful information about the circumstances and patterns of Black education in the South, while also offering an encouraging outlook for the future—something that most of the published articles in the scholarly journals during this period failed to do.

However, an examination of Trenholm’s personal correspondence revealed that he agonized about how to keep his institution alive. He did not suffer in silence. Trenholm appealed to the State Board of Education for relief, while presenting his faculty in the most positive light. He also supported members of his faculty in their individual applications to the General Education Board to help finance their professional pursuits.

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150 Ibid.
151 Ibid., 26, 21.
152 Reference to Trenholm balancing on a “high-wire” has been observed by other scholars and historians. See “Martyr on a Tightrope”; also see Karpinski, Visible Company of Professionals; Perry, History of ATA.
In 1932 Trenholm wrote to the Alabama State Board of Education that “particular note should be taken of the considerable attitude manifested by teachers and outside creditors in the face of our extreme financial embarrassment.” Offering a positive spin on a desperate situation, Trenholm added, “The teachers have manifested a very wholesome attitude despite the inconvenience and even suffering for them as a result of our inability to pay them.” He respectfully demanded help from the state, stating that “substantial relief must be forthcoming if our operation would be insured for the next year.”

Trenholm’s frustration can be seen in his personal correspondence to his trusted faculty members. In February 1933 Trenholm wrote his friend and faculty member, Charles Johnson Dunn:

Conditions are still extremely critical in Alabama. The legislature is again in session. We do not know just what will be the developments. We are rather inclined to expect a continuance of the very difficult situation for some time, since our legislators do not seem to be getting tighter on the program that will offer much relief. It looks like we finally are going to have to suffer a 55% reduction in our appropriation for this year, which, of course, will be even more difficult for all of us after the accrued obligations which we have from our unpaid salaries of the past two years.

In a follow-up letter a month later, Trenholm updated Dunn, saying, “There seems to be very little hope of state money.”

Because of the state’s financial woes and its inability to meet its obligations to State Teachers College, teachers such as Charles Dunn requested increased stipends from the General Education Board (GEB). It was not uncommon for faculty to appeal individually to the GEB for funding to support their professional educational opportunities or continued education at Northern institutions. For example, in March 1933, the State Teachers College owed “Mr. Dunn back salary for six months,” and owed “Mrs. Dunn back salary for seven months” from the 1931-

\[154\] H. Councill Trenholm to State Board of Education, 1932, ASU Archives.

\[155\] H. C. Trenholm to Charles Dunn, 27 February 1933.

\[156\] H. C. Trenholm to Charles Dunn, 24 March 1933.
1932 school year and an additional “three months” from the 1932-1933 year through March.\textsuperscript{157} The Dunns remained faithful teachers at the institution. Their daughter, Kathy, who would eventually graduate as valedictorian of her class from Lab High in 1958, go on to earn her doctoral degree, and then return to Alabama State College as a professor in education.\textsuperscript{158}

In the 1930s several members of the State Teachers College faculty were able to continue their educational pursuits, thanks to grants from the GEB. For example, H. Councill Trenholm continued his graduate studies in the Ph.D. program at the University of Chicago; H. L. VanDyke earned his Master of Science degree at the University of Michigan; and Dean N. Taylor studied toward his Ph.D. degree at the University of California.\textsuperscript{159} Ever confident in the power of education for professional advancement, still other faculty members used their own resources to pursue higher education, such as W. McKinley Menchan, who studied at Columbia University. Earning a graduate degree from a prestigious university was an accomplishment that was highly respected and recognized in the Black community and often noted in \textit{The NAACP Crisis} magazine. The laboratory high school pupils benefited greatly from these highly educated faculty members.

In August, 1933, President Trenholm announced to his faculty that they could expect their long overdue salary payment by the start of the school-year.\textsuperscript{160} By October 13, 1933, Trenholm informed his faculty that payment was coming. “Pro-rata checks for the month of September are being released today,” Trenholm wrote. But the news was not all good. Unfortunately, payment was “again on the fifty percent salary basis as was the practice during the past school term.”

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\textsuperscript{157}H. C. Trenholm to Jackson Davis, 2 March 1933.
\textsuperscript{159}Watkins, \textit{ASU History}, 63.
\textsuperscript{160}H. C. Trenholm to State Teachers College Faculty Members, August 17, 1933, H. C. Trenholm Papers, box 179-27, file 5, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.
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assured the faculty that he was keeping track of the months of incomplete payment. “This half-month payment makes an aggregate of seven full months of salary,” Trenholm noted and promised that their four months of unpaid earnings would be paid once the state was in better financial condition and could meet the financial commitments to State Teachers College.  

However, the next semester, President Trenholm again found himself writing to his faculty to explain that they would continue to receive only half their salaries. The state issued an “executive order to all Treasurers holding up any payments on 1933-1934 accounts until the new accounting system authorized by the State Board of Education is set up.” Because of this, the faculty members had to plan to be unpaid for even longer. Trenholm offered hope that the balance due on their salaries would be paid soon. “It is expected that the new machinery will be set up at that time. In the meanwhile we ‘standby’ with our willingness to do whatever may be possible in overwhelming emergencies as has been our past policy.” During this bleakest financial period, Trenholm personally wrote “notes” to the teachers and paid portions of their salaries out of his own pockets.

Trenholm conducted a study of the “value of public school property” in the 1933-1934 academic year and found that the value of the sites, buildings, and equipment for the state’s White public schools totaled $49,291,477. Based on White student enrollment figures for the same year, the state had invested $113.05 for each pupil. This was compared to the value of the sites, buildings, and equipment for the state’s Black schools of a total of $4,734,701. Based on

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161 H. C. Trenholm to Faculty and Staff, 12 October 1933.

162 H. C. Trenholm to State Teachers College Faculty, 1934.

163 Ibid.

164 “G. W. Trenholm invested in Alabama Power Co. When H. Councill became president, he had a pretty well established [personal] fund. He was financially secure because of this and would take notes from the teacher. Most of the money from the band would keep the dining hall open – those monies would keep the student end functioning with the institution.” Montgomery historian, in discussion with the author, March 2011.

165 Ibid., 63.
population and enrollment, the investment per pupil was $22.23. However, a direct comparison did not tell the whole story since funding for Black education was supplemented by philanthropic organizations and by Black communities above and beyond the state and local taxes paid by the Black citizens. The state provided only 55 percent of the funding for Black public schools.  

This was the smallest amount of funding to support a state institution “than any of the other state teachers colleges for white students” in the nation. These disparities in funding underscore the disadvantage to Black educators, students, and families. It also accentuates their self-determination, agency, intelligence, and leadership to continue to develop progressive education programs while under such extreme repression.

According to Trenholm’s 1937-1938 report to the Alabama State Board of Education, state appropriations had returned to the “normal” amount, albeit still a sum that was significantly below adequate or “equal.” In his report, he praised the loyalty of his staff during the long years of partial payment. “Their spirit and sacrifice warrants unreserved commendation,” Trenholm wrote, “and is ample justification for any salary readjustments that may be proposed with the return to normalcy.” Yet the state put aside devising a reimbursement plan for the years of partial payment. Moreover, while the state appropriations to support the Black teachers college were restored, they remained insufficient.

The “Study of Higher Education for Negroes in Alabama” published in 1940 noted the history of poor support for higher educational institutions for Alabama’s African Americans. It declared that “higher educational facilities for Negroes in Alabama, under public support and

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control, [were] far from adequate.”

Citing the State’s penurious allocation “for the higher education of Negroes in Alabama [of] only approximately 6.24 percent of the total appropriations for all higher educational purposes in Alabama,” the report recommended the strengthening of State Teachers College library and science laboratory facilities, as well as substantive increases in its number of faculty and their salaries. Not questioning the (segregated) dual educational systems, the report also called for the state to allocate “funds for the PURCHASE” [sic] of “those graduate and professional fields which [were] not offered by either State Teachers College for Negroes or Tuskegee Institute.”

Unfortunately, the recommendations by Edgar Knight and his associates regarding the State Teachers College seemed to fall on deaf ears. On February 1, 1943, H. Councill Trenholm wrote to Honorable Hayse Tucker, state senator from Tuscaloosa County, Alabama and the State Finance Director. Tucker was regarded by many as “a statesman in the true sense of the word” and “champion of the cause of education.” The purpose of Trenholm’s eight-page letter was to appeal for additional capital funding from the state. “The last state appropriations made to the Montgomery State Teachers College for capital outlay,” Trenholm informed Tucker, “were made by the 1927 legislature and by the 1931 legislature” to “cover the unpaid share of the original appropriation” designated for the “William Burns Paterson College Administrative Classroom building and for the Bibb Graves Dormitory for Women in 1928-1929.” Trenholm further explained that “half-million dollars of improvements had been made to the college plant …

169 Knight, Education for Negroes in Alabama, 43.

170 Ibid.

171 Ibid.

172 Tuscaloosa (AL) News, September 30, 1941. In 1957 he was part of the 21 member Alabama Education Commission that was formed with a charge to “examine programs, policies, and financial needs for the next ten years.” See Anne Permaloff and Carl Grafton, Political Power In Alabama: The More Things Change (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 92.

173 H. C. Trenholm to Honorable Hayse Tucker, 1 February 1943.
without any financial participation of the state” [original emphasis]. The state appropriations that had been provided to the college during those years were dedicated to teachers’ salaries.

Of great concern to Trenholm was the potential loss of accreditation from SACS and the American Association of Teachers Colleges. In 1935, State Teachers College had earned a “Class B” rating, which meant that it had been placed on its “Approved List of Colleges and Universities for Negro Youth” but needed improvement in one or two areas. The report stated that the “general quality of the work” was up to standards, but the number and salaries of the teachers, and volumes in the library were below standard. 175

Without adequate funding, teachers could not be paid, a sufficient number of instructors could not be hired for the college, buildings fell into disrepair, and teaching materials were limited. Trenholm informed Tucker that even with the college’s “maximum efforts” to supplement the state funding while operating on a skeletal budget, “the salaries of [the] teachers [were] miserably and embarrassingly low.” 176 Trenholm advised Tucker that he had previously brought the desperate financial condition of State Teachers College to the attention of the State Superintendent of Education, but to no avail.

In 1945, a study was conducted by Hubert Searcy, president of Huntingdon College in Montgomery, and Maurice F. Seay, of the University of Kentucky, entitled “Public Education in Alabama, A Report of the Alabama Educational Survey Commission.” It was sponsored by the American Council on Education. Among its findings it reported that “the State Teachers College for Negroes ... [was] much like that of the teachers colleges for white students, but in addition it offer[ed] opportunity for a year of graduate work.” 177 It further found that the “fields for the

174 Ibid. See Appendix C for a summary of ASC’s funding from other sources.
175 Ibid.
176 Ibid.
preparation of secondary teachers [were] somewhat more extensive at Montgomery than at the state teachers colleges for white students.\textsuperscript{178} While the Laboratory High School continued to be ranked at the top of secondary education, its facilities were noted as “inadequate.” Stated as “the second greatest need,” the report called for “plant improvement” of the State Teachers College, Montgomery.\textsuperscript{179} Specially, it cited “the entirely unsuitable” buildings for its training school.\textsuperscript{180}

By 1946 Alabama State Teachers College for Negroes reported having awarded a total of 336 bachelor degrees.\textsuperscript{181} It conferred more bachelor degrees than any other Black college or university in the South.\textsuperscript{182} For the academic year 1946-1947, its total enrollment was 4,368. Graduate enrollments also witnessed a sharp increase. Alabama State Teachers College reported 267 students enrolled in its graduate program in 1946. This placed the teachers college in fourth place among graduate programs offered by HBCUs. The first three places were held by Atlanta University, reporting 1,151 graduate enrollment; Prairie View, 448; and Howard at 439 graduate enrollment.\textsuperscript{183}

By 1949 Trenholm reported that there had “been accelerated effort to improve the facilities for the education of Negroes ... in increasing the appropriations for maintenance, in broadening and expanding ‘upward’ the curriculum offerings, and in making appreciable additions to the plant facilities.”\textsuperscript{184} In Alabama, “the appropriations for the higher education of Negroes [had]
been trebled.” Carefully selecting his words, Trenholm wrote to the membership, encouraging teachers’ diligence in their attention to the state and federal policies in education. “The Alabama State Teachers Association” represented those professionals who work in “legally-mandated separate schools,” Trenholm stated. As leaders in education, Trenholm counseled, they shared “a vital concern as to how Alabama will provide the opportunity for its Negro citizens to prepare for maximum service to our communities and our state and our nation.” Trenholm hoped his research assisted them in understanding the “major imperative needs” of Black education. He also encouraged “local efforts to stimulate both interest and action on the part of citizens and their representatives in the State Legislature of Alabama.”

In 1951 Trenholm wrote again to state officials, appealing for adequate funding. He expressed his concern about the threat of losing accreditation, which would damage the credibility and enrollments at the college. Trenholm explained that the years of inadequate funding from the state directly effected the College’s ability to attract students, qualified faculty, and, most urgently, pay adequate salaries. Further, because the funding from the state was so limited, the collections in the library had been neglected. In lieu of expanding the library holdings, the state appropriations had been used to pay salaries. Identified in the accreditation report as problems were the low teacher salaries, limited administrative staff, and inadequate library holdings. Trenholm’s language to the board reflected his view of the desperate state of his college. There was a need to “prevent a retrogression and reversal at Alabama’s largest center of Negro college population which is imminent at the present critical and crucial stage of inadequacy and insufficiency in appropriation, in staff, and in present facilities for instruction

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185 Ibid., i, iii.
186 Ibid., iii.
187 H. C. Trenholm to State Board of Education, January 1951. This correspondence was in the form of a comprehensive report more than forty pages long.
188 Ibid., 9, 15.
and for campus living. Trenholm declared, to broaden “financial support.”

Trenholm also conveyed in his report to the state board his efforts to continue to appeal to the GEB for supplemental funding for “the improvement of the facilities of the Science Department and of the Library.” But there was a rub. The GEB would only provide such funds if the state demonstrated “more adequate” appropriations “for the magnitude of the college program,” Trenholm explained to the board. He traced the history of contributions from sources outside the state, which spoke of Trenholm’s ingenuity and persistence in attracting funding.

Included among the substantive contributions to the college over the years was the financial support from the “colored citizens,” starting as early as 1905 and continuing through present day. Trenholm described the college’s “recent” fundraising effort, which had been held as part of the “Diamond-Jubilee Anniversary-Year.” The African American community had contributed half of the needed amount for the planned new physical education facility, including a standard swimming pool of A.A.U. dimensions.

Trenholm also offered a reminder of the 1949 findings of the Governor’s Committee on Higher Education for Negroes, which declared, “That it be the accepted obligation and the declared intention of the State of Alabama to provide for Negro youth parallel educational opportunities which shall be fully comparable to those opportunities provided in the state

\[\text{189} \text{ Ibid., 41.}\]
\[\text{190} \text{ Ibid.}\]
\[\text{191} \text{ Ibid.}\]
\[\text{192} \text{ Ibid., 30. What Trenholm did not include was his effort managing the school’s band and orchestra as part of his fundraising effort. Similar to other HBCUs that sent their famous singers to entertain as part of fundraising (such as the Jubilee Singers at Fisk), State Teachers College had two musical groups, The Revelers, which was an orchestra, and the Bama State Collegians, which was a band. The ASU Special Collections holds scores of pages pertaining to the fundraising efforts of these groups, as well as Trenholm’s personal and business correspondence for bookings, fee collections, and the bands’ needs.}\]
institutions for white students”[^193] [emphasis in original]. Trenholm also reminded the board of the “sacrifice made almost twenty years ago in the ‘era of proration’” when faculty went unpaid for months and, over a four-year period, 1932-1936, only received 48.7 percent of their income. There were still “29 persons” teaching at the college or laboratory school who had never received their back salaries promised by the state.[^194]

In the closing pages of the 1951 report, Trenholm reminded the board about the State Teachers College’s “national status and prestige” as a result of its history of educating more African American teachers than any other teachers college in the nation. He further pointed out that the work of its laboratory school as part of its participation in national studies was respected for its “pioneering innovation and dynamic approaches” and “resulted in recognition and national prestige.”[^195] Trenholm closed with an “appeal to the State of Alabama to take a major forward step through administrative and legislative decisions this year.”[^196] Change began to happen.

### A Changing Society

In 1946 the State Board of Education authorized a name change for the institution to better reflect its comprehensive offerings from State Teachers College for Negroes to Alabama State College for Negroes.[^197] For several more years, appropriations continued to be tortuously slow in coming and limited in quantity, but Trenholm noted in his 1949 report to the ASTA that the “Court Decisions ... had significant impact upon the acceleration of expansion and improvement

[^193]: Ibid.
[^194]: Ibid., 39.
[^195]: Ibid., 40.
[^196]: Ibid., 42.
[^197]: Alabama State Board of Education, “Meeting Agenda and Minutes, January 14, 1948,” box SG20903, ADAH.
in the provision of better educational opportunity for Negroes at the graduate and professional level. These decisions led to increased funding of black state colleges in hopes of preventing the desegregation of all-White colleges and universities.

By 1953, one year before the Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Alabama state legislature authorized “conditional appropriations” of $350,000 for new campus buildings. The State Board of Education finally authorized the issuance of Alabama State College Revenue-Building Bonds in October 1954. Also in 1954 the institution’s name was changed again, dropping the “for Negroes,” to become “Alabama State College.”

Leading the college through the 1950s continued to require deft balance in an increasingly tense political environment. The “happy days” of the 1950s could be seen in the building and expansion projects underway at the college. Trenholm could certainly take pride in how far the institution had come. Not only had it survived the extraordinary circumstances in the 1930s, but it was the largest producer of certified Black teachers in the nation. The laboratory high school continued to be hailed as a privileged and prestigious high school education and was again selected to participate in a major study of Black secondary education in the South. Trenholm continued to be extremely active in the ASTA, the ATA, and the ASLNH, while also maintaining

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199 For a chronological record of the college’s buildings, see Appendix N.


201 H. C. Trenholm to State Board of Education January 1951; Aaron Brown, *Ladders to Improvement: A Report of a Project for the Improvement of Instruction in Secondary Schools* (New York: The Phelps-Stokes Fund, 1960). The first report was issued July 30, 1958. The project was noted in more than a hundred newspapers. For example, the *New York Times*, “Helping the Negro Child,” 10 August 1958. It hailed the “encouraging” reports “for all who believe in the democratic process.” The GEB provided a $450,000 grant to support the cooperative study among schools, colleges, and community leaders, under the direction of Dr. Aaron Brown, and with the “aid” of seventeen “prominent consultants.” Alabama State College Laboratory High School was among the participants.
his “social reconstructionist” curriculum in Lab High, and supporting the NAACP in the fight for equal educational opportunities for African Americans.

In 1953 at the American Teachers Association’s 50th annual convention (formerly the NATCS), H. Councill Trenholm announced the special contribution of $5,000 to the NAACP for the cause of Black education.\(^{202}\) The case of *Brown v. Board of Education* had been argued by Thurgood Marshall and his team before the U.S. Supreme Court in December 1952, and was planned to be “reargued” a year later, December 1953.\(^{203}\) Every dollar was meaningful to the team of lawyers who were challenging segregation in public education on behalf of African Americans. In appreciation, Thurgood Marshall, Director of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, wrote Trenholm, expressing his “deep thanks” for the “most heartening” contribution from the American Teachers Association. It answers the unjust criticisms of our Negro teachers who are so often the victims of propaganda to the effect that they are only interested in themselves and not in the welfare of their people. You and the other officers of the American Teachers Association have set the pace with regular contributions over a long period of years.\(^{204}\) Boasting the largest membership in the ATA, the Alabama State Teachers Association had contributed more than any other state association.

On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education*:

Segregation of white and Negro children in the public schools of a State solely on the basis of race, pursuant to state laws permitting or requiring such segregation, denies to Negro children the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment – even though the physical facilities and other “tangible” factors of white and Negro schools may be equal.... The “separate but equal”

\(^{202}\) “ATA Gives $5,000 to Education Cause,” *Crisis* 60, no. 7 (August-September 1953).


\(^{204}\) “ATA Gives $5,000.”
doctrine adopted in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537, has no place in the field of public education.\(^{208}\)

It was a time of celebration – and caution – for African Americans everywhere, as many Black educators braced for the expected backlash.\(^{206}\)

Within a year, White supremacists in Alabama launched the state-organized “massive resistance” to the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.\(^{207}\) By 1955, the White Citizens Council was organized and sought to block Atherine Lucy’s attempt to enroll at the University of Alabama. And by the 1958 Alabama governor elections, the Ku Klux Klan was once again in full public view, with passionate White support.\(^{208}\)

By 1959 Levi Watkins, who had accepted the new post of “College Business Officer” in that same year, observed that “President Trenholm and Alabama State” were sandwiched by extreme pressures from the White and Black communities as they attempted to maintain balance on a “racial tightrope.”\(^{209}\) Watkins gravely noted that they “were under enormous pressure from Negroes with an awakened interest in the privileges of ‘first-class’ citizenship and from whites determined to preserve the ‘Southern way of life.’”\(^{210}\)

In *Living Our Stories, Telling Our Truths*, V. P. Franklin highlighted the lives of Black intellectuals, including the celebrated author James Baldwin. Reflecting on his travels through the South in the late 1950s, Baldwin told of the “menacing” daily life he witnessed in the “white South”:

\(^{205}\) *Brown v. Board of Education*.


\(^{210}\) Watkins, *ASU History*, 110.
Baldwin described what he found menacing and those who were menaced in the white South, and conveyed his awe and admiration for African Americans living in Little Rock, Montgomery, Birmingham, and other cities. “So many black men I talked to in the South in those years were—I can find no other word for them—heroic.” Their heroism was not demonstrated in large public events, but in small private ways. “What impressed me was how they went about their daily tasks, in the teeth of southern terror.”

H. C. Trenholm, a reserved intellectual, with a thin frame and gaunt features, daily lived in that menacing environment. Nevertheless, from his earliest years, he was determined to be an educator who would influence the future direction of education in Alabama and the nation.

In documenting this oppressive history and pattern of deficient funding, one might be tempted to be caught up in the sad sirens’ hypnotic song, luring the historian to join the negative analyses of African American education under the Jim Crow segregation. As historian Faustine Jones noted, “There has been scant attention paid by social science researchers to effective black public schools” and asserted that “positive views about black learners” have been “far outnumbered by negative views which exude ‘an attitude of hopelessness.’”

The history of Alabama State College and its Laboratory High School provides an opportunity to expand the historical narrative on secondary education in the South. While the journey was, indeed, a challenging one for the institution, the State Teachers College Laboratory High School remained a consistent source of academic excellence. Examining Trenholm’s leadership at Alabama State College reveals his effort to “slowly and cautiously” influence secondary education, and the laboratory high school was a participant or player every step of the way. It maintained its “Class A” SACS ranking and continued to host visitors and send privileged graduates off to promising collegiate careers and beyond. By the late 1940s and into the early 1950s, in the midst of the nation’s changing society, a Lab High education was renowned for its progressive teaching techniques, academic excellence, and the comprehensive education that it provided for its pupils.

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211 Franklin, Living Our Stories, 313.

212 Hathaway, “The Class of 1944.”
Chapter VI

“We were taught to push boundaries.”

John Winston, Jr. sat at the end of the fine wood dining room table and conveyed, at once, a sage-like poise and an approachable demeanor that offered a hint of his keen intellect and impressive resume. A handsome man with a youthful comportment that belied his years, he had come to the meeting to discuss his experience at Alabama State Teachers College Laboratory High School in the 1940s. Lab High “was like a private school,” Winston stated. The selectivity of the student body represented primarily those who were college-bound. It was the high school where you were certain to get a comprehensive education, taught by well-trained and highly educated teachers, including those who “came over from the college just to teach” certain subjects, such as senior-level foreign language or chemistry. With the stated expectation that its


2 William Winston (Lab High graduate, M.A., Veterans Administrator, leader in the community), in discussion with the author, March 2011.

3 John Winston, Jr. (Lab High graduate, MD, leader in the community), in discussion with the author, March 2011.

4 Ibid.
graduates would go on to college and become leaders in their communities, being a student at Lab High was serious business. “If you didn’t measure up academically, they put you out. If your conduct wasn’t right, they put you out,” recalled Winston. Being a student at the laboratory school was not taken lightly and was a privilege that John Winston recognized even as a teen.

Graduating from Lab High usually meant entry into the middle class and the promise of a professional career. Winston graduated from Lab High in 1945, earned his B.S. in science from State Teachers College in 1950, his M.S. in science from Columbia University in 1951, and after spending eighteen months in the U. S. Air Force earned his M.D. from Meharry Medical College in 1956. Winston continued his medical training, earning a surgical certification in 1964. At eighty-two, he had enjoyed almost fifty years in private practice in Montgomery. He was among the first few African American physicians to “topple racial barriers in Alabama,” acquiring medical privileges in the previously “Whites only” Montgomery hospitals.5 Included in his long list of leadership in community service was the distinction of being the first African American elected to the Montgomery County Board of Education in 1974.6 Winston credited his success to his parents, who set him on the path to academic excellence.

“My mother graduated in the first Junior College Class of 1922,” Winston said with self-assured pride. Both of Winston’s parents were teachers, considered an “elite” profession among African Americans.7 And Winston’s parents wanted the best for their children. When it was time

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5 Clinton Colmenares, “Medical Breakthrough: Black Montgomery Doctors Helped Topple Racial Barriers” Montgomery Advertiser (1999); “John Winston, Jr., Pryor Winston Center,” ASU Today 2, no. 5 (October 2009), 19.


for their oldest to go to high school, his mother, Frankie Madison, talked to the principal at Lab High, “to get [him] in.” John was the first of the Winston’s eight children to graduate from Lab High. Spanning twenty-five years, the collected oral histories of the Madison-Winston family were a testimony to Alabama State College Laboratory High School’s “excellent academic preparation” for success in higher education and professional careers. From the Winston matriarch as a graduate of the first junior college class, to her first born, John Jr., Lab High graduate of 1945, to her youngest daughter Frankie, valedictorian of the Lab High Class of 1960, the Winston family represented the living history of Lab High.

By the mid-twentieth century, the Laboratory High School had been a source of high educational standards at Alabama State College for almost fifty years. As early as 1907, it stood out among teacher training programs, noted for its strong education of teachers who were well prepared to pass the state teacher examination. It had boasted a well-educated teaching staff, which was consistently ranked at the top in the state, had a full complement of college-educated faculty holding the “Rank I” teacher certificate, and achieved record of graduation rates that far exceeded the local and national norms. Lab High had offered a college preparatory, liberal arts


8 J. Winston, discussion.

9 W. Winston, discussion.


11 Williams, “Colored Public High Schools.”

curriculum, implementing teaching methodologies that reflected the leading national educational trends, and had been an active participant in major studies of Black secondary education.\textsuperscript{13} It positively influenced its students and teachers for generations, contributing a “priceless contribution to human progress.”\textsuperscript{14}

Lab High was like a family – we were a community and even though we were different from each other and we had different abilities, we really cared about each other and made sure that each of us did well.... We learned to rely on ourselves and each other.... We were competitive, [but at the same time] cooperative.... We were taught to push boundaries.... It was a laboratory school in the best sense of the word.

Lab High Graduates from Classes 1947-1963.\textsuperscript{15}

From its earliest years, the school established a philosophy that spoke to the importance of individual growth, developing a sense of responsibility for the school and community, and nurturing the belief that education empowered citizens of the United States. Philosophical threads drawn from John Dewey, George Counts, Harold Rugg, and W. E. B. Du Bois were woven throughout Lab High’s strategies, mission statement, and teaching objectives. At Alabama State College Laboratory High School, its “core philosophy of education” recognized the necessity of a learning environment that encouraged “optimum individual development and growth in social understandings and skills,” which were considered “the essential elements in developing the individual who will have the capability and motivation for effective participation

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\textsuperscript{13} Ambrose Caliver reported data that indicated only 8.6 per cent of Negro students who enrolled in secondary education “remain to graduate” and “of those, 35% continue their education” in college or university. Caliver, \textit{Secondary Education for Negroes}, 58-59.


\textsuperscript{15} W. A. Bell, Miles College, Birmingham, Alabama to H. C. Trenholm, 1950. Written in recognition of Trenholm’s twenty-fifth anniversary as president, in the context of the college’s contributions to education, which included the work of the “heart” of the institution, the laboratory school. \textit{Academic Meet for High School Seniors 1939}, 4.

Georgette Norman, Althea Thompson Thomas, Nerissa Shephard Mann, Henry G. Johnson, Azalie B. Hightower, Alice Wimberly (Lab High graduates), in discussion with the author, September 2008/March 2011.
in our democratic society." In *The Child and Society*, John Dewey emphasized the need to create in schools an educational environment that would ignite the child’s interests in and commitment to learning and growing as a citizen in a larger community.

We must make each one of our schools an embryonic community life, active with types of occupations that reflect the life of the larger society and permeated throughout with the spirit of art, history, and science. When the school introduces and trains each child of society into membership within such a little community, saturating him [or her] with the spirit of service, and providing him [or her] with the instruments of effective self-direction, we shall have the deepest and best guaranty of a larger society which is worthy, lovely, and harmonious.  

Dewey focused on the need for education to be experienced, as in a laboratory where teaching and learning were approached with an intention to concretize a philosophy of education through “deliberate” practice. At Laboratory High School in Montgomery, Alabama, each student was prized as essential members of the community with an obligation to develop into citizens infused with the spirit of service and the ideals of democracy. It emphasized the importance and strength of its community and its connection to the larger African American community and to the nation. Lab High’s philosophy stated,

This school holds that each student should have the opportunity for a happy, meaningful school experience. Each child should have many opportunities for optimum living and growing in the school as a useful individual, as a member of his school groups and as a democratic participant in his community and nation. Each student should be stimulated to social growth in terms of his ability, needs, and interests as interpreted against the social background in which he lives and interacts.

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16. *The Alabama State College Laboratory High School at Montgomery, Alabama Home Room Guidance Program*, (1947), 3. This phrasing also appeared in other editions found in the archives, including the 1948, 1953, 1955. It was repeated in the *Catalogue of the Faculty and Students and Announcements of Courses, 1947-48*, and in other editions.


Georgette Norman, the Director of the award-winning Rosa Parks Museum in Montgomery, Alabama and 1963 Lab High valedictorian, described her awareness of enjoying a privileged education, one that infused a sense of greater mission beyond learning to read and write. Norman asserted that while she recognized her goal was to learn to the best of her ability and become a contributing member of the Lab High community, she never lost sight of the idea that she was also part of something much bigger. “We took away that we, too, had a responsibility to the world,” declared Norman.20 Richard Jordan, a 1954 graduate, school teacher, and civil rights activist, stated that a Lab High education not only prepared students to succeed in college, but to make a contribution to society.21 The laboratory high school’s philosophy was that the “school existed for the perpetuation and strengthening of the democratic way of life”—its philosophy echoed the ideas of George Counts in that it embraced the notion that schools could teach democracy as a deliberate practice.22

In 1955 Lab High Principal W. H. Coston addressed the students:

[As you return prepare] to take your place in the greater school of LIFE [emphasis in original] it is our wish that you will take full advantage of the opportunities which are yours.... You have a responsibility to yourself to seek to prove that the investment in education is one that will return rich dividends in developing a dynamic human personality ... who will make our world a greater place in which to live because you lived in it.23

Lab High’s philosophy and mission were affirmed in the oral histories of the former Lab School students, who commonly referred to Lab School’s cohesive community, the respect they

20 Georgette Norman (Lab High graduate, M.A., Executive Director, Rosa Parks Museum, Montgomery, Alabama), in discussion with the author, September 2008/March 2011.

21 Richard Jordan (Lab High graduate, M.A., teacher and administrative superintendent), in discussion with the author, September 2008, September 2009. Jordan was one of the students who helped ASC teacher, Jo Ann Robinson distribute the fliers to African American residents of Montgomery, which helped launch the Montgomery bus boycott.

22 Counts, Schools Can Teach Democracy, 17-19.

had for each other’s differences and abilities, and the lessons of leadership, self-empowerment, and commitment to service.\textsuperscript{24} These perspectives were corroborated by outside observers.

In the mid-twentieth century, the evaluating committee complimented the high school as a “laboratory ... where boys and girls actually solve their own problems, [and] where they plan and evaluate their own work,” offering “numerous opportunities for the development of democratic leadership.”\textsuperscript{25} In a formal 1953 report, the evaluation team concluded that the Alabama State College Laboratory High School served as a positive influence on education in Alabama by “providing the finest type of democratic teaching,” which served to inspire future teachers.

A sampling of the topics for commencement speeches presented over the years further reveals the students’ engagement with national educational issues. It is likely that students’ speeches were approved by the administrators who deemed the topic worthy of public presentation at the annual commencement.

In the first quarter of the twentieth century during the Progressive Era, graduating students spoke about “A New Stamp on Education,” “Intelligence as a Factor in School Progress,” and

\textsuperscript{24} “Close-knit” was the most common expression used by the former students to describe their sense of community. Jessica Pettus Rankins (Lab School graduate, M.A., teacher and pianist), written personal communications to the author, December 2008. Reference to “ respecting” each other was another common sentiment recollected by Lab School students. Also see Peggy B. Gill, “Community, Commitment, and African American Education: The Jackson School of Smith County, Texas, 1925-1954,” \textit{Journal of African American History} 87 (Spring 2002): 256-268. “Historian V.P. Franklin’s work on the African American cultural value system suggests that this behavior is consistent with African Americans’ cultural value of self-determination; and, it stems from an ‘ethos of service’ which called upon those who acquired literacy to transfer this knowledge to others in the black community.” Quote from Carter Julian Savage, \textit{Cultural Capital and African American Agency}, citing V. P Franklin, “Cultural Capital and Black Higher Education: The A.M.E. Colleges and Universities as Collective Economic Enterprises, 1856-1910,” in Alonzo Smith and Spencer Crew, eds., \textit{Mind on Freedom: Celebrating the Heritage of the Black Colleges and Universities} (Washington, DC, 1999).

\textsuperscript{25} Robert C. Hammock, Coordinator, Reviewing Committee, University of Alabama, “An Administrative Statement of Setting, Role, Function and Philosophy of a College-Operated Teachers-Education Laboratory School,” \textit{Report of the Evaluating Committee}, (1953), The Commission on Colleges and University Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (SACS), 38-39, hereafter cited as \textit{SACS Report of Evaluating Committee}. SACS’s evaluators also suggested that the laboratory school could improve by not expecting every student to enter college, and by increasing the appeal of the vocational classes (i.e., shop) to male students. This is discussed later in this chapter.
“Woman as an Educator.” These speeches were given during a period when White policymakers publicly declared that schools for African Americans needed to teach “simpler subjects” so that the Black students would not have to “strain to grasp what [was] simply beyond their reach.” Caution was advised for African American administrators and teachers who had been educated at Northern universities and were “eager to train at a high level the future leaders of their race.” The GEB claimed that they “pitched their instruction on a plane at once too high” for their students who were “incapable of mastering” such material. Instead of struggling to teach complex subjects, the recommendation was to emphasize more practical training that better fit the Black students’ “environment, capacity, and opportunity.” It was clear from the commencement addresses that the high school had taken on the more complicated issues where school and society intersected. By mid-twentieth century, important topics continued to be addressed at the commencements with speeches on “Qualifications of a Good Citizen,” “Opportunities Call Forth Responsibilities,” “The Right to Live the American Way,” “Recognizing the Challenge of Life,” and “Negro at the Crossroads.”

Although our earlier histories have conveyed a message that less abstruse curricula, such as industrial arts, were de rigueur in Black schools during the era of segregation, it is evident from the titles of these speeches that the work of Lab High aimed to develop in its students

26 “Commencement Day, State Normal School, Montgomery Alabama” (May 28, 1918), Alma G. Baker’s personal archive; “State Normal School, Spring Quarter, 1922 Commencement Exercises” (May 31, 1922). The commencement programs listed 29 high school graduates in 1918, and 5 Junior College and 25 senior high school graduates for 1922.


28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 “The 1958 Spring Quarter Laboratory School Commencement,” (May 28, 1958); “The 1952 Spring Quarter Laboratory School Commencement,” (May 23, 1952); “The 1957 Spring Quarter Laboratory School Commencement,” (May 24, 1957); and “The 1962 Spring Quarter Laboratory School Commencement” (1963), Winston Personal Archives.
“intelligence, broad sympathy, knowledge of the word that was and is, and of the relation of [citizens] to it”—progressive ideas inspired by such scholars as W. E. B. Du Bois and his theory of “The Talented Tenth,” or John Dewey and his essays on intelligence, or George Counts’s and Harold Rugg’s notions about the right for all citizens to enjoy America’s promise of democracy.31 Frankie Madison, who became an educator and mother of eight, would have been among those early graduates. Her children, all of whom earned advanced degrees, would have been among those attending the mid-century ceremonies. The education and career successes of the Madison-Winston family have affirmed the vision of G. W. and H. C. Trenholm to develop future leaders through education.

The Lab High families, students, teachers, and its leadership believed that an education was an investment that would bring advancement to the individual and, thus, to society as a whole. Simply put, Lab School graduates “were expected to be somebody,” averred Grace King Glaze, class of 1952.32 Students were expected to make a difference, to push the boundaries for self-development, with an aim to serve the greater community. “My teachers were constantly saying to me, ‘No, you can do this. You can do that.’ So I never feared,” declared Vanzetta Penn McPherson, Lab School graduate and United States Magistrate Judge.33

“Expectations were high” was an oft-repeated phrase in the oral histories of former Lab High students. Laboratory High School graduates spoke of the teachers and principals maintaining an effective balance between strict discipline and high expectations, grounded in a

32 Grace King Glaze (Lab High graduate) in discussion with the author, September 2008/March 2011.
caring and nurturing educational environment. While students agreed that “rules were strictly enforced,” there was also agreement that the strict discipline was engendered in “a caring family atmosphere—a community” in which the teachers genuinely cared about the well-being of the “whole” child and students “helped each other achieve.” Vanzetta Penn McPherson observed, “We were told so many times [by our teachers], ‘you have to be better in order to get the same thing.’ And it was absolutely true.” “We were held to a higher standard than other schools,” stated Althea Thomas, a 1950 graduate of Lab High, accomplished musician, and Laboratory High School music teacher for ten years. Reflecting on the philosophy and mission of the school, the high expectations balanced by the caring environment, and the given success of its students, Vanzetta McPherson affirmed that Lab High was “most certainly privileged.”

As students at Lab High, “we knew when we entered the school as kindergartners that we were going to college,” declared Carolyn Jackson, Lab School Class of 1951, who earned undergraduate and master’s degrees and enjoyed a career as a teacher and principal. David

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35 Rosalyn King (Lab High graduate, teacher, principal, and assistant superintendent), in discussion with the author, September 2008/March 2011. Azalie B. Hightower (Lab High graduate, journalist, educator, M.A., Ph.D.), in discussion with the author, September 2008/March 2011.

36 Ibid.

37 Althea Thomas (Lab High graduate, M.Ed., Music teacher), in discussion with the author, September 2008/March 2011.

38 Vanzetta Penn McPherson (Lab High graduate, Columbia University Law School graduate, appointed United States Magistrate Judge), in discussion with the author, March 2011.

39 Carolyn Jackson (Lab High graduate, M.A., teacher, and principal), in discussion with the author, September 2008/March 2011. This was a common theme among the former students.
Winston agreed, “To attend Lab High was a privilege.” David Winston, Lab High class of 1957, earned his bachelor of science and master’s degrees in mathematics from Alabama State College. After a successful career in banking, having served as the vice president and chief financial officer of a Savings and Loan, Winston finished out his career as a college professor in mathematics at ASC. “If you were at Lab High,” Winston stated, “going to college was expected.” Being a student at Lab High meant that you were among the “elite” in the community. Even today, the former students realized that the experience of having been at Alabama State College Laboratory High School created a sense of privilege and prestige.

Georgette Norman agreed. The prestige of a laboratory school education did not diminish. “We knew we were really privileged to attend Lab High,” Norman stated, “like an elite.” “To be clear,” she continued, “the whole idea of the Black elite was not based on money, because we all had none.” Her comment was echoed by other graduates. The idea of being among the elite “wasn’t about the money, but about being educated.... Money didn’t always translate as social class,” explained Emmadene Winston, who graduated from Lab High and went on to earn her masters of arts degree at the University of Michigan and Ph.D. at Howard University. What made Lab High even more of a precious opportunity was its selective enrollment.

40 D. Winston, discussion. David Winston was a double major in math and science and earned his M.A.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid. King, Norman, discussions.

43 The notion of lasting privilege and prestige of having enjoyed a Lab High education was expressed in all of the collected oral histories.

44 Norman, discussion.

45 Emmadene Winston (Lab High graduate, M.A., Ph.D., and career in social work), in discussion with the author, March 2011. Also to the point of the value of education as capital, see Franklin and Savage, Cultural Capital and Black Education, 51; Franklin, Living Our Stories, 98.
Enrollments

Because Lab School was a “teaching laboratory,” it was small, and “enrollment [was] necessarily restricted.”46 The college Catalogue of Announcements of Courses and the Alabama State College Laboratory School Student Handbook described the Laboratory High School as an “integral part of the college.”47 The admission policy for Lab School was described as “non-selected,” which meant that there was no formalized profile for suitable applicants such as the expectation of a minimum score on a required entrance exam. The one “requirement” included in the Lab School’s Handbook was “that students must [be able to] do a minimum grade of acceptable work in order to be admitted” and “to be continued.”48

The overriding restriction was that because it was part of the college and intended as a teaching laboratory for “observation, experimentation, and examination,” there was only one class per grade. The Laboratory High School Handbook explained that there were “many advantages enjoyed by the students in the Laboratory school” as a result of its limited enrollment.49 Among these advantages were small class sizes, broadened opportunities for advanced scholastic and extracurricular pursuits, and increased teacher attention, which, in turn, increased the instructional quality.50

Analysis of the student rosters over the years and the collected oral histories suggested that there was also an unofficial admissions process. In a 1951 report on the administration and function of the Laboratory School, President H. C. Trenholm stated that there were “probable selective factors in terms of parental alumni preferences” within the restricted enrollment

47 Ibid.
48 Ibid., 56.
50 Ibid.
requirement.\textsuperscript{51} Getting to be among those precious few who were admitted had to do with “legacy” and “who you knew.”\textsuperscript{52} Former students offered a range of explanations about how one got to be selected to become a Lab High student.

At the top of the list of criteria for admission was being a child of the college or laboratory school’s faculty, or having had a sibling graduate from Lab High. This was corroborated by analysis of the student rosters.\textsuperscript{53} For example, included among those students in this category were President Trenholm’s children.\textsuperscript{54}

 Preferential admission practices did not mean that once enrolled, these students were held to a different standard. Once the students were in the school, they had to work just as hard to remain. William Winston, a student who entered Lab School as a fourth grader and graduated in 1954, reported that while many of the students were children and grandchildren of past Lab High graduates, that did not mean acceptance to Lab School was automatic, or that one would stay enrolled in the school. Winston’s classmate, Richard Jordan, concurred. Jordan, a renowned community leader who enjoyed a successful career as a public school teacher and college instructor, stated, “You had to be able to do the work, and not everybody could.”\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{51}SACS Report of Evaluating Committee, 7. The philosophy, objectives, admissions policy, and the like, were provided by the school. The evaluating committee then assessed whether these statements were evidenced in their examination and observations of the school.

\textsuperscript{52}Jordan, in discussion with the author, May 2008; Varner (Montgomery and Alabama State University Historian), in discussion with the author, March 2011; Winston family, discussion; V. Penn McPherson, discussion.

\textsuperscript{53}When the question was posed to former Lab High students about how decisions were made for admission, a frequent recollection was that children of the faculty were enrolled at Lab High. Records of faculty members’ families and their schooling do not exist. However, over the years, Lab High student enrollment records include children of the faculty. See the Commencement programs and the Catalogue of Students and Faculty.


\textsuperscript{55}Jordan, discussion.
Other than the preferential admission for the children of faculty, “there was no cut and dry elimination system” for admissions, stated Charles Varner, Jr., Montgomery historian and former Alabama State University Vice President for University Advancement and Director for Alumni Relations. 56 “Even though the selectivity was there,” Varner said, “it was not overt.” 57 Varner (not a former Lab High student) and several Lab High graduates interviewed recalled that “there was an understanding between the Lutheran school, [part of] Trinity Lutheran Church, that went from grades one through eight,” so the students who “matriculated from Trinity could automatically come to Lab High School,” which meant that they “didn't get screened.” 58 While they enjoyed a direct channel for admission, their continued enrollment was not guaranteed—that depended on each child’s academic performance. As the Handbook stated, continued enrollment at Lab High required a “satisfactory academic, conduct, and attitude record” in order to remain a Lab High student. 59

Another factor that would have had some effect on enrollment was the tuition fee. Nominal as it was, for many families it was enough to prohibit their children from attending. The Alabama State College Laboratory High School was funded by Montgomery County and by the college. The county paid only the teachers’ salaries (although the college maintained control over hiring decisions), and the college funded all other costs associated with the laboratory school. The laboratory pupils were also expected to purchase their own class texts, which many African American families could not afford.

In 1953 the enrollment fee for Lab High was $12.50 per semester, $25 for the year. “Scholarship awards” were given by Alabama State College each year in recognition of “relative

56 Varner, discussion.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
superiority in Academic achievement.\textsuperscript{60} The student who maintained the “highest achievement” in grade point average of the students in his or her grade earned a scholarship covering full tuition for the following semester.\textsuperscript{61} This helped students like Quiester Craig, who earned the scholarship for a number of years. He was able to attend Lab High for “free.” His parents did not make much money, and every penny counted. Craig, from the class of 1954 and a star basketball player, took the entrance examination for Morehouse College during his junior year, achieving a score that not only enabled him to enroll in college a year early, but qualified him for a full college scholarship. Craig continued his education, earning a Ph.D. in accounting from the University of Missouri and eventually became the Dean of the School of Business and Economics at North Carolina A&T State University. Under Craig’s leadership, its accounting program was the first at an HBCU to receive full accreditation. Included among a lengthy list of leadership achievements, Craig was the first African American to serve as president of the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACS B), the first African American elected as president of Beta Gamma Sigma, the International Honor Society for outstanding business students in AACS B-accredited colleges, and one of the first honorees of the Ph.D. Project Hall of Fame Award, a project designed to encourage minorities (African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans) to earn their Ph.D. and return to the classroom as teachers. Craig credited his Lab High education as providing the sure foundation on which he built his future academic success.\textsuperscript{62}

Another admission criterion that was most often cited by former students was based on family “values”—clearly a non-quantifiable or objective measure—nonetheless, it was a common

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 16.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{62} Quiester Craig (Lab High graduate, M.B.A., Ph.D., Dean, among many national leadership distinctions), in discussions with the author, September 2008/March 2012.
theme. “It was about valuing education,” a former student explained, which also meant valuing hard work, exhibiting good conduct, and the belief that education would offer social mobility. While no one disputed the idea that Lab High students and their families valued the importance and power of education, “it was quite a mix of students.” The majority of students came from families whose parents had some level of formal education, but there were others “who rolled up in the Greyhound bus and went to school there just because of the kind of school it was,” stated Varner. Obtaining a Lab High education meant that you had “arrived.”

Analysis of the Lab High demographics revealed that the parents of students held a full range of jobs. This affirmed the oral histories that reported of diversity in family backgrounds. The leading profession represented was educator—teacher, college professor, or principal. Not all of the parents of Lab High students who were educators worked at the laboratory school or the college. It was common for the area public school teachers to send their children to Lab High. Claiming that a child was a Lab High student was a point of pride. The second most prominent occupation that parents of Lab High students held was “laborer.” For some students, their education at Lab High was the family’s first opportunity to pursue social mobility through education.

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63 R. King, E. Bell, A. Collier, A. Hightower, N. Mann, Norman, W. Winston, F. W. Turner, D. Winston, E. Winston, discussions. The notion that “family values” played a role in the admissions decision was cited by the vast majority of the Lab High students who were interviewed.

64 King, discussion; Winston family discussion.

65 Varner, discussion.

66 Ibid.

67 D. Winston, E. Winston, discussions. The expression of “you’ve arrived” was part of the discussion of ways African Americans demonstrated being among the “elite” within a segregated society. Included in the discussion were issues of restrictive housing options and the power of education for social uplift.

68 W. Winston, discussion; Varner, discussion; King, discussion.
Exhibit 2. Occupational Status of Parents from the Lab High Class of 1953

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Percent of Total Parent Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional and semi-professional workers</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm/Farm Managers</td>
<td>.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proprietors, Managers, Officials</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical or Kindred workers</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salesmen/women</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craftsmen, Foremen, Kindred workers</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operative and Kindred workers</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Service Workers</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Occupations (other than Domestic)</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laborers</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homemakers</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed or on Relief</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Laborer/Farm Foreman</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reflecting on the varied student body, a 1954 Lab High graduate stated that “there was a lot of diversity in that campus. Aside from going to school with your neighbors,” she pointed out, “the teacher’s children went to Lab School, and we had kids coming in from the country [rural area] and kids from other parts of the country.”

By being at Lab High, “we got to know more people in school than just our neighborhood families. It added diversity to our educational experiences.”

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69 Varner, discussion; W. Winston, discussion.


71 Helen Thompson (Lab High graduate, M.A., teacher), in discussion with the author, September 2008/March 2011. Ms. Thompson came to Lab High from Trinity Lutheran.

72 Ibid.
The educational attainment levels of the parents also indicated the non-selectivity of the admissions practices. Outside reviewers of the laboratory school concurred; Lab High’s demographics on parental occupation and educational status tended “to emphasize the non-selectivity of the pupils.”  

Exhibit 3. Demographics of Parents’ Educational Level of Attainment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parental Educational Level of Attainment</th>
<th>Percent of Total Parent Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did not complete elementary school</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed elementary school</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended, but did not complete High School</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduated from high school</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended but did not graduate from post-secondary school</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed a two year college course</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduated from a four-year college course</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaged in Graduate Studies</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earned Master’s Degrees</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earned PhD Degree</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These data indicate that Lab High enjoyed diversity in both socio-economic and educational status. According to the students, a sense of uniformity was reflected in a shared sense of values. They all saw the value of education, which meant dedication to and faith in its importance for self-realization, personal enrichment, and social uplift. “The overriding theme that I would like to be pointed out,” a former student stated, “is that we were in a totally superb academic environment that everyone valued,” regardless of the kind of jobs parents had.

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74 Ibid., 28.
75 Glaze, discussion.
Diversity was also evident in the students’ scholastic abilities and involvement. Despite the fact that the community of Lab School students was a relatively small group, it reflected the larger society in terms of its range of “mental ability” as measured by IQ tests. Not every student performed at the same level or pursued similar interests. While former students stated that each student was expected to “achieve and to be leaders” within a “very competitive” school environment, students were also expected to help one another. It was a notion of “each one, teach one,” recalled Bettye Givens Boyd, 1954 Lab School graduate. These themes of expectations to achieve, emphasis on leadership, a competitive climate, and peer teaching were common throughout the oral histories. “We were taught to respect each other and to rely on each other,” remembered Linda Wilson, who also emphasized the healthy competition for earning recognition, honors, and awards.

The expectation to succeed was intense. “[Each of us] felt you were supposed to do well, and you did well,” remembered Eleanor Lewis Dawkins, class of 1955. Dawkins left Lab High after the 10th grade to enter Fisk University, having scored well on Fisk’s entrance exam.

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76 The 1953 SACS Report of Evaluating Committee included a section on “Mental Ability.” Described, was the recent implementation of a standardized IQ testing program. Scores for the Lab High students ranged from “over 124,” which placed students into the “94th percentile,” to “below 76,” which placed students in the “below 6th percentile.” The test was given to students in grades 7 through 12. These tests were controversial in the period and only one student (1963) orally recollected such a test. The differences of ability was spoken about by the former students, not as it pertained to standardized tests scores, but as it applied to students’ demonstrated aptitude of the subject matter, as perceived by the students in the classroom. SACS Report of Evaluating Committee, 13.

77 J. Rankins, written personal communication. The remembrances of the expectations to achieve and the competitive climate are taken from specific interviews or personal communications; common themes among all Lab School students who were interviewed by the author.

78 Bettye Givens Boyd (Lab High graduate, M.A. Educator-Special Education), written communication to the author September 2008/March 2011.

79 Linda McKenzie Wilson (Lab High graduate, M.A., teacher, principal), written communication to the author, October 2008/March 2011.

80 Eleanor Lewis Dawkins (Lab High graduate), in discussion with the author, September 2008 and March 2011.
Various Black colleges and universities recruited Lab High students each year. Students were invited to sit for the entrance exam to determine readiness for college and for possible scholarship awards. “It was shameful not to go to college. If you weren’t going to college, that was something to be embarrassed about,” recollected a former graduate.81 This expectation to enter college was reflected in the school’s published material. Conveyed in the laboratory school’s “Philosophy,” its “Educational Objectives,” and “The Activities of Our School” was that preparing pupils for a successful college career was a chief aim.82

In 1953 SACS conducted a study designed to ascertain the “educational intentions of the members of the 12th grade class.” It found that “100%” of the students intended to continue their education: “79.15%” indicated intentions to “attend a 4-year college or university,” and “20.83%” indicated their aim to “attend other post-secondary school, e.g., business college or technical institute (sic).” From the 1951-1952 graduating class of 39 students, “80 percent planned to attend 4-year college[s], while four planned to attend schools classed as business,” and four indicated that they were undecided about which type of higher education they might choose.83 The reviewers reported that “these data are rather constant for all of the graduation classes.”84 A follow-up study was done to determine the actual outcomes of students’ intentions, and it revealed that “81.5 percent of the class of 1952 entered four year colleges.”85 SACS concluded that the data indicated a “consistency in educational intentions, what happens to graduates, and purpose of the school.”86

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81 Penn McPherson, discussion.
83 *SACS Report of the Evaluating Committee*, 16.
84 Ibid., 17.
85 Ibid., 19.
86 Ibid.
It is informative to consider the national statistics for high school graduation and college completion data for this period (see Exhibit 4).

Exhibit 4. Years of School Completed, by Race and Sex: 1960

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1960*</th>
<th>“Percent of Persons 25 Years Old and Over Completing—”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High School 4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Negro and Other” Males</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Males</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Negro and Other” Females</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Females</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The U.S. Department of Commerce, *Historical Statistics of the United States* reported data on educational attainment for students based on gender, race, and age. Looking at the statistics provided for “White” and “Negro” males and females, twenty-five years old and older, the 1960 statistics allows comparisons. From a national perspective, only 12.1 percent of “Negro and Other” males completed four years of high school. The completion percentage substantially decreased as educational attainment level increased; 4.4 percent African Americans completed three years of college, and only 3.5 percent finished four or more years of college. White males fared almost twice as well as Black male students in high school graduation rates, and almost three times higher in college graduation rates. African American females scored slightly higher than African American males in almost every category, but about half as well as White females.

It is illuminating to examine the national data for White students in comparison to ASC Laboratory High School numbers. According to the 1960 *Historical Statistics of the United States*, 22.2 percent of White males completed four years of high school, 9.1 percent finished one to three years of college, and 10.3 percent completed four years or more of college. Data for

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White females reported high school graduation rates of 29.2, but as educational attainment level increased, White female completion rates declined; 9.5 percent for one to three years of college, and 6.0 percent for completing four or more years. A side-by-side comparison to ASC Lab High students amplifies the level of academic achievement at Lab School.

Exhibit 5. Comparison of Years of School National Census of Persons Ages 25 and Older, by Race – 1960\textsuperscript{88} and ASC Laboratory School Seniors – 1952\textsuperscript{89}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High School 4 years</th>
<th>College 1 to 3 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lab School Students</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>81.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Census “Negro and Other” Students</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Census White Students</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These statistics may also be compared to the local Montgomery White public high schools. Robert E. Lee High School reported that 41 percent of its 1958 graduating class expressed intentions to enter college, with an additional 10 percent indicating interest in attending a professional or business school.\textsuperscript{90} Sidney Lanier High School reported that for the graduating class of 1950, 54.8 percent indicated intentions to enter college, with an additional 2.9 percent expressing interest in enrolling in a professional or business school.\textsuperscript{91} It is important to keep in mind that the SACS evaluation of Lab High found that 100 percent of its students intended on

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{89} SACS Report of Evaluating Committee,16.

\textsuperscript{90} The SACS evaluators noted that 60 percent of its parent community was described as “white collar” professionals.

\textsuperscript{91} Report of Reviewing Committee Applying The Evaluative Criteria In Sidney Lanier High School, Montgomery, Alabama, April 1950, “Educational Intentions,” 23, 16, box High School Evaluation Studies 1950-1952, SG11935. The SACS evaluators noted that “the high number of students planning to continue their education probably has a direct relation to the fact that [12.1%] ... show an intelligence [IQ] below 90.”
continuing their education, and 20 percent indicated interest in a professional or business school.\textsuperscript{92}

An evaluation of academic achievement as measured by graduation rate and college entrance statistics clearly distinguished Lab High from schools for African Americans described in most historical accounts of Black secondary schooling during this period. Lab High’s characteristic of high graduation and college enrollment rates validated the recollections of former students who praised the academic excellence of their laboratory school education.

Another distinctive characteristic of a laboratory school education was being situated on a college campus. Located at the “heart” of the institution, Lab High was housed in the first permanent structure erected on the Montgomery campus, Tullibody Hall. It was a facility the African American community was most proud of—a tangible symbol of promise and potential in Black education. Lab High remained in that building for six decades.

\textbf{Facilities}

Tullibody Hall was a beautiful, stately building when it was constructed in 1907.\textsuperscript{93} In the earliest days of the Normal School, students in the primary and secondary classes far outnumbered those who were prepared for higher education, and within that construct the “model school” was created, which was the earliest form of the “laboratory school.” Under G. W. Trenholm, the model or practice school served as the “laboratory” for practical exploration of teaching methodologies—the opportunity “to learn by doing,” reflecting the Progressive

\textsuperscript{92} SACS Report of Evaluating Committee, 17.

\textsuperscript{93} Construction began on the building in 1905 and opened for classes in 1907. It included “14 classrooms and an auditorium” funded by “contributions of $5,000 from the colored citizens and from $17,514.50 collected as insurance from the previous frame structure that had burned.” See H. C. Trenholm Report to Alabama State Board of Education, 14.
By 1925, the practice school took the name “Laboratory School” under the leadership of H. C. Trenholm and remained an integral part of Alabama State College. As the college began to expand and new buildings were erected, the laboratory school remained in Tullibody Hall.

Over the decades, the aging building began to show wear from heavy use. Funding for capital improvements was scarce, and it was not until 1933 that funds were allocated to refurbish Tullibody Hall. At long last, Lab High was “given attention and improved” by installing “toilet facilities in the basement of Tullibody Auditorium.” While certainly an improvement, it did not address the renovation that was needed. By the 1940s Tullibody’s once beautiful structure was outdated and worn and provided cramped quarters for its intended use. The pattern of “inordinately low per capital expenditures for education and correspondingly inferior and inadequate school facilities” was not unique to the State Teachers Laboratory High School, as David Lane pointed out in his “Report of the National Advisory Committee on Education and the Problem of Negro Education.”

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94 Catalogue of The Faculty and Students for 1921-1922, 14; See H. C. Trenholm Report to Alabama State Board of Education, 35.

95 “The Campus Laboratory School,” in “Twilight School at Alabama State College Laboratory High School, Montgomery, 1956” (no page).


Inequitable funding for African American educational facilities in the twentieth century had become an increasing problem, according to educational historian Horace Mann Bond, in his study *The Education of the Negro in the American Social Order*. The “vast expenditures for whites” that occurred in the early 1930s, in “transportation, modern buildings, elaborate equipment, and all sorts of auxiliaries,” contrasted with African American schooling, which received “a smaller proportion of the public funds in the Southern states than they [had to date] of any time in past history.” Such a disparity was evident in Montgomery when comparing the facilities for the two “most prestigious” high schools in the city—Lab High and Sidney Lanier High School, the all-White high school.

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98 King, personal communication with the author, September 2008/March 2012.


100 Bond, *Education of the Negro*, 170-71.

Tullibody Hall stood as it was constructed in 1907, with its fourteen classrooms and spacious auditorium, which served both the Lab School and the college, while Sidney Lanier High School, constructed in 1929 and referred to as “The Million Dollar School,” offered the White students an expansive stone edifice, with a gym, locker room facilities, multiple indoor toilet facilities, shop, auditorium, and cafeteria, among other amenities.  

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102 Sidney Lanier High School, circa 1930s-1941, Sexton’s Studio, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.

103 Report of Reviewing Committee Applying The Evaluative Criteria In Sidney Lanier High School, Montgomery, Alabama, April 1950, “School Plant,” 63-69, box High School Evaluation Studies 1950-1952, SG11935, ADAH. It is important to remember that although these two institutions are compared, Lab High, was the only Black public high school in the city of Montgomery until 1937, although part of the college. Montgomery County Board of Education paid the salaries of the Lab High full time faculty. For an analysis of the history of Sidney Lanier, see Alison L. Murphy, “Fifty Years of Challenges to the Colorline, Montgomery, Alabama,” (master’s thesis, Georgia State University, December 2009).
By 1944–45 the figures showed expenditure per Black student of $52.40, compared to $224.08 for Whites. The 1947 Annual Report of the Alabama State Department of Education noted that the value of buildings, contents, and sites for Black schools was less than one-third the value than that of the White schools. Moreover, over half of the buildings used for African American schooling in Alabama were “not school buildings, but other structures” such as churches. While Tullibody had the distinction of being designed as a school, by the 1950s, its decades of use meant it was in need of real restoration.

“If I had to point out one thing that wasn’t so great about our school, it would be our building,” noted a 1954 Lab High graduate. This observation was shared by every former student interviewed. The “building was a problem,” echoed a number of former Lab High students. “The windows didn’t close properly,” and “there were no screens on the windows.” The improvements that had been made in 1933 of basement toilets were not perceived as an asset by the students in the 1940s and 1950s. “When you had to use the facilities [toilet], you had to go outside, all the way down to the basement,” recalled a former student. “Now that got chilly in the winter and when you really had to go, it felt like a mighty long trip,” declared another. By the 1940s the condition of the Lab High School facility was a drawback. By the 1950s outside evaluators saw this as a “major problem” and it threatened the school’s accreditation status.

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104 Daniel, “Availability of Education,” 454. The city of Montgomery had the second largest Black population in the state where 56.7 percent of the total school-age population was Black. By the 1940s, two city high schools and two “country” or rural high schools were constructed to provide education for Montgomery’s teens. There was also a “regionally-accredited Catholic high school.” See SACS Report of Evaluating Committee, 6. Also see “1947 Annual Report of the State Department of Education,” as quoted in H. C. Trenholm, “Some Measures of Progress,” 12.


106 Ibid.

107 Winston, discussion. Every Lab High student expressed the worn, outdated condition of the building.

108 Willodean Mitchell Malden (Lab High graduate, M.A., teacher, administrator), in discussion with the author, September 2008/March 2011.

109 Craig, discussion.
There is a major problem of inadequate and outmoded facilities. More classroom space, both for the instructional program and for the associated activities of teacher-education students, is urgently needed. Non-provided space for lunchroom, general-purpose activities, art, music and for staff lounges are needed. Additional space for library is urgent.\footnote{SACS Report of Evaluating Committee, (1953), 9.}

While there was agreement from the former students that Lab High’s building was unimpressive, a perceived positive was that Tullibody Hall was situated on the college campus, which expanded the “facilities” available to include the college resources. “We were right there on the college campus, so all we had to do was cross the street or walk across the lawn to use the college facilities,” noted a 1953 graduate.\footnote{Robert Nesbitt (Lab High graduate, M.A., teacher, real estate), in discussion with the author, September 2008/March 2011.} College facilities that were open to the high school students included the band room, gym, swimming pool, library, and even classrooms for advanced foreign languages and chemistry.\footnote{Jeanne E. Nesbitt Moore Smiley (Lab High graduate, B.A., teacher), written communication to the author, September 2008/March 2011; Alma Dacus Collier (Lab High graduate, M.A., Ed.D., psychometrist, higher education administration), in discussion with the author, September 2008/March 2011; J. Winston, discussion. Access to college facilities and faculty was a common observation among the students.}

Students could also take advantage of “Hornet Stadium which [had] separate concrete stands and separate lighting for football and for baseball along with a quarter-mile track.”\footnote{Ibid.} Lab School graduate Helen Thompson, class of 1954, recalled that, “We had exposure to everything we wanted.”\footnote{H. Thompson, discussion.} This was a far cry from the overcrowded classrooms and desperate conditions, prevalent in Southern Black education in the era of legal segregation.\footnote{Woodson, The Mis-Education of the Negro (Washington D.C.: Associated Publishers, 1933), xii; 8-16; 85, 71, 12, 69; Ashmore, The Negro and the Schools (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1954) 17-18, 29, 64, 126.} Alice Wimberly, a 1947 Lab High graduate with a master’s in education and a thirty-two year career as a teacher,
remembered the benefits of being able to participate in the college activities: “I enjoyed the school because I could ... [do] gymnastics, play in the band and high school basketball; and I also could take a college level course” in the summer.\textsuperscript{116} The opportunity to be a student in State Teachers College Laboratory School was a privilege and brought the promise of empowerment. Being situated on a college campus went a long way in enhancing the facilities available to these high school students.

This perception was also shared by the SACS reviewing committee. Despite the “inadequate and outmoded facilities,” which had been cited as a major problem, the “special advantage” to the Lab High students to be able to use “facilities set up for the college students” was noted in the committee’s final summary in 1953.\textsuperscript{117} Moreover, “availability of excellent facilities” was highlighted among Lab High’s “strengths” in the evaluation report.\textsuperscript{118} By 1947 the State Teachers College campus comprised more than eleven buildings, and by 1952, the new gym and swimming facility were completed.\textsuperscript{119} (See Appendix N for a Listing of the College Campus Buildings and their Purposes.)

Even though the lab school building was in the center of the college, Lab High students were not permitted to simply wander around the campus. “There was a little brick wall around the building” [Tullibody Hall], remembered Frankie Winston Turner, who had entered Lab School as a six-year-old third grader.\textsuperscript{120} That one building was the school, which according to some students, felt a little inadequate at times when compared to the facilities of the White schools, but there was consensus among former students that the limited facilities did not impair

\textsuperscript{116} Wimberly, discussion.

\textsuperscript{117} \textit{SACS Report of Evaluating Committee} 7. Also see Conner, “Tax Supported Teacher Training Institutions,” 625.

\textsuperscript{118} \textit{SACS Report of Evaluating Committee}, 57.

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{120} Frankie Winston Turner, in discussion with the author, March 2011.
their education. In fact, a common perception was that the lab school facilities added to the sense of community. “We were all in one building, so it was a tightknit community,” explained Judge Vanzetta Penn McPherson, “and we had the benefit of being on a college campus.” A student had to have permission and a specific purpose to go to another building, but because they were on a college campus, they enjoyed “a very sheltered” environment. “We were insulated in many ways,” noted a 1958 graduate. “I found it inspiring,” stated Willodean Mitchell Malden, a 1949 Lab High graduate who went on to earn her master’s degree in education and enjoy a career as a teacher. Crammed? Perhaps. Underprivileged? “Certainly not.”

Frederick A. Rodgers’ study, The Black High School and Its Community, echoed this sentiment. Rodger’s found that “in studying the relationship between the black high school and its community, it is necessary to view the student, the school, and the community as components of a complex interdependent system.” This interdependent system was a direct result of de jure segregation. Lab High graduates spoke of being “sheltered” and “in our own world,” which echoed Rodgers’s observations about all-Black schools in North Carolina. He similarly asserted

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121 “We had a big auditorium,” described one graduate, “that was also used by the college students, but we didn’t have any cafeteria for the Lab High students like at Sidney Lanier, so we carried our lunch every day and ate in the classroom.” Jordan, discussion. The elementary school grades were housed in a separate building. Lab School and Lab High were used interchangeably; however, most former students stated that the entire school was often referred to as “Lab High.”

122 McPherson, discussion; D. Winston, F. W. Turner, J. Turner, E. Winston, discussions. This was a common comment from students.

123 Helen Smith, (Lab High graduate), in discussion with the author, September 2008. Multiple students spoke of the Lab High School college campus setting as a very sheltered environment.

124 Kathy Dunn Jackson (Lab High graduate, M.A., Ed.D., Professor), in discussion with the author, September 2008/March 2011.

125 Malden, discussion.

126 McPherson, discussion; K. Jackson, discussion; and Norman, discussion.

127 Rodgers, The Black High School, 15, 11.
that “the black high school was a world of its own, with its own dynamic quality.” The values of the community were echoed in the school and vice versa. It was a consistent and comfortable environment where each child felt valued and understood and, in turn, could value and understand the importance of their education. For Lab High students, their school community was the Lab School, the safe and inspiring environs of the college campus, and the support of the surrounding Black community.

By the 1950s despite the dilapidated and antiquated condition of Tullibody Hall, former students claimed that “the limited facilities had nothing to do with the quality of learning.” It was widely perceived that Lab High offered an excellent education, taught by “well trained” and “highly professional teachers” who “understood the mission of the school and made sure the students understood the mission of the school.” For most, the high expectations of the teaching staff empowered the students and instilled life lessons that spelled for future success. For some students, though, it was too much pressure. “In my class,” reported William Winston, “some of the kids almost had a nervous breakdown.” The teachers “accepted no excuses.” Yet, of the former students interviewed for this study, when asked what characteristics contributed to the perception of Lab High as a good school, the majority ranked the teachers first.

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129 Hightower, discussion.

130 Nesbitt, discussion; C. Jackson, written personal communication March 2011; W. Winston, written personal communication to the author, October 2008/March 2011.

131 W. Winston, discussion.

132 Ibid.
Teachers and Curriculum

“The teachers were real professionals,” remarked Rosalyn King from the class of 1958. King went on to become a teacher herself, to earn her master’s degree in education, and to continue her career in education as a principal, curriculum instructor, and assistant superintendent.\(^{133}\) This was borne out in the primary sources. In documents such as college bulletins, guidance books, annual conference reports, handbooks, teacher training materials, accreditation reports, personal papers, and others, provided evidence of the high level of professionalism of the Lab High teaching staff through the decades.

One measure of professionalism can be found in the teachers’ level of education.

Exhibit 8. The Laboratory Elementary – High School Teachers 1947-48
(*Also instruction in College)\(^{134}\)

| (*) Mr. Thomas J. Mayberry, Jr. | B.S., State Teachers College; M.A. University of Penn. |
| (*) Miss Eula L. Gilbert | A.B. Talladega College; A.M. Teachers College, Columbia University |
| Mrs. Etta B. Alexander | B.S., Southern University |
| (*) Miss Annetta Baugh | A.B., Fisk University; A.M. Fisk University |
| (*) Mrs. Rose S. Brent | B.S., State Teachers College; Graduate year, State Teachers College |
| Mr. Wellington H. Coston | B.S. Straight College, M.Ed., State Teachers College |
| Mrs. Clara M. Davie | A.B. Livingstone College; B.S., State Teachers College; M.Ed. State Teachers College |
| Mrs. Faustine H. Dunn | A.B., Livingstone College; M.Ed., State Teachers College; |
| (*) Miss Cora L. Finley | A.B., Spelman College; A.M., Atlanta University |
| (*) Mr. Severne A. Frazier | B.S., State Teachers College; Graduate Year Ohio State University |
| (*) Miss Murillo T. Garner | B.S., Virginia State College; A.M. Teachers College, Columbia University |
| (*) Mr. Alfred C. Henry | B.S., State Teachers College; M.Ed., State Teachers College |
| (*) Mr. Elisha James | B.S., State Teachers College; A.M., Teachers College, Columbia University |
| Miss Beatrice Mann | B.S., Morgan State College; M.S., Temple University |
| Miss Willete McGinty | B.S., State Teachers College; Graduate Year, State Teachers College |
| Mrs. Ollie R. Phillips | B.S. State Teachers College; A.M. Fisk University |

\(^{133}\) King, discussion.

In 1948, President H. C. Trenholm presented data on Black secondary education to the Alabama State Teachers Association. He reported that for the 1945-46 academic year, 25.8 percent of the Black teachers in Alabama held four-year college degrees, compared to 49.0 percent of the White teachers. This can be compared to the Laboratory High School teachers in the same period, one hundred percent of whom held a minimum of a four-year college degree. Further, eighteen of the twenty-three faculty members did graduate level work, fifteen of those having earned advanced graduate degrees.

Beyond their educational attainment, the Alabama State College Laboratory High School teachers garnered statewide respect for their positive influence on Black education. They were established leaders in education, having been participants in the state and national studies of Black secondary education. They had helped host multiple statewide and region-wide teachers’ conferences and workshops, including developing materials for other teachers. Their students had a graduation record that was approximately eight times the national average for African American high school students. In addition to their influence in professional circles and on student outcomes, Lab High teachers were noted for their personal concern for the students.

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Students shared testimonies that spoke of the skill of the teachers—their high expectations, challenging assignments, and strictness, blended with clarity of teaching, thoroughness, and genuine concern. This was confirmed by outside evaluators, who commended the staff for establishing an “emotional atmosphere so conducive [sic] to learning” and “for the activities and experiences they provided.”

Students reported that while each teacher had his or her own style, every teacher “really cared about whether you did the work or not.” Full participation in the classroom and completed homework assignments were the usual expectations. English was a core subject, taught all four years, covering grammar, essay writing, and literature. Sciences included biology, chemistry, and physics. Math courses included freshman mathematics, geometry, and algebra, with an option to continue mathematics study at the college. The history and social studies curriculum covered world history, American history, social studies, and geography. Physical education was also taught all four years in high school, and required special courses included art, music, home economics, and manual arts. Students had the option to take additional elective courses in subjects such as art or music if they wanted. Foreign languages were offered throughout the four years, and as was the case with the mathematics and science courses,

Committee. Cf. Dongbin Kim and John L. Rury, “The Changing Profile of College Access: The Truman Commission and Enrollment Patterns in the Postwar Era,” History of Education Quarterly 47, no. 3 (August, 2007): 302-327. Kim and Rury asserted that while enrollments increased, the South still lagged. Using the Integrated Public Use Microdata Samples, they reported data that the Black high school graduation rate in the East South Central region was only 13 percent in 1940, and jumped to 27.5 percent by 1960. In 1940 African Americans students “represented just 3 percent” of the enrolled collegiate population” for ages 19 to 20, “far less than their share of the total age cohort (about 10 percent). The greatest single barrier to access for these groups at the time was low levels of high school completion. In 1940, just 13 percent of African American nineteen-and twenty-year olds were high school graduates compared to 48 percent of whites.” Also see Claudia Goldin, “America’s Graduation from High School: The Evolution and Spread of Secondary Schooling in the Twentieth Century,” Journal of Economic History 58, no. 2 (June, 1998): 345-374, 346.

139 J. Smiley, written communication to the author, September 2008/March 2011. This was a common observation made by the former Lab High students.

140 SACS Report of Evaluating Committee, 49.

141 K. Jackson, discussion.
students with exceptional aptitude and interest were invited to continue more advanced courses at the college.

Laboratory High School’s foreign language program enjoyed a strong reputation. The 1953 SACS Evaluating Committee praised the teachers “for their professional preparation in the languages, for their promotion of efficiency in the use of the languages, and for their methods of instruction which indicated careful planning and preparation.” This was consistent with the oral histories. Alma Dacus Collier graduated from Lab School in 1958 and, inspired by her thorough preparation in foreign languages, went on to earn her undergraduate degree in French and German from Fisk University, which allowed her to return to Lab School to teach foreign languages at Lab High in 1963 and 1964. Collier continued her graduate studies, earning an Ed.D. in Higher Education Administration from George Washington University in Washington, D.C. While Collier praised her foreign language readiness, she emphasized the positive influence Lab High’s comprehensive, liberal arts curriculum had on her academic success.

The strong foundation from Lab High’s comprehensive English classes was also praised by former students. Numerous comments were made about the thorough grammar lessons, essay writing, and critiques in Mrs. Davie’s classes. Peggy Taylor, who fondly remembered Mrs. Davie, stated that Mrs. Davie “was extremely rigorous about diagramming sentences” and attributed her ability to work as a free-lance journalist to her teacher from Lab School. Judge

142 The strong foreign language program was mentioned in the Academic Meet materials, the Catalogue of Announcements of Courses, and SACS Report of Evaluating Committee. Latin had been offered for a number of years, but by the mid-1950s, the French and Spanish were offered. Offering two languages for a four-year program was unusual for a high school in the segregated South. SACS Report of Evaluating Committee, 55.

143 Ibid.

144 Collier, discussion.

145 Peggy Taylor (Lab School student), in discussion with the author, September 2009/March 2011. Another student offered a somewhat contrasting view of Ms. Davie. She agreed that Mrs. Davie succeeded in students learning, but shared that she was “the sourest looking woman.” Helen Plump (Lab High student, B.A., teacher, homemaker), in discussion with the author, March 2011.
McPherson similarly attributed her accomplished writing skills to the foundation she received at Lab High. “Mrs. Davie would put a subject on the board ... the class would have a conversation about it ... and then you spent the entire class period writing an essay,” McPherson remembered. These were thought-provoking topics. Students were expected to synthesize their ideas and analyze “the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of the topic.” Most impressive to McPherson was the fact that Mrs. Davie would take those essays home, grade them, and return them the next day with comments and corrections. “When you do that for two or three years,” the Judge declared, “you learn how to write, you learn how to spell, you learn how to think and analyze, and you learn good grammar.”

While it seemed that the Lab High students agreed that Mrs. Davie taught English grammar and writing well, not everyone expressed an affinity for her. In the minds of some students, she was not always reasonable. Students recalled that Mrs. Davie, also a homeroom teacher, persisted in requiring the students to learn passages from the Bible. “Now I thought that was a little much,” recalled a former student. “She kept me in during my recess until I learned one hundred Psalms and the Beatitudes,” he remembered. “She said I was stubborn,” he flatly stated, but added, “And I was.” At the end of the day, while he might not have liked it, he learned his English grammar and could recite the Beatitudes.

Beyond teaching the basics, Lab High had a long history of also offering more advanced curricula. Students across the years reported studying the works of Edgar Allen Poe and James Weldon Johnson, staging the plays of Shakespeare and the original works scripted by the Lab

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146 McPherson, discussion.
147 Ibid.
148 Ibid. The Evaluating Committee “commended” the strong English program and its excellence in teaching students the skills of communication. SACS Report of the Evaluating Committee, 49. Mrs. Davie’s skill as a seasoned English teacher was talked about by many of the Lab High students, and the resulting positive influence on their future academic and career pursuits.
149 W. Winston, in discussion with the author, February 2012.
High teaching staff, performing classical musical works by Schubert such as “Gloria in Excelsis Deo,” and African American spirituals such as “When De Lord Sound His Trumpet,” and engaging in hands-on, “real life” projects in the classroom, such as constructing a “tornado” or “building an electric motor from scratch.” Linda Wilson, who entered Lab School in 1950, spoke admiringly of her science teacher who “taught science throughout the curriculum,” making it interesting and memorable.

Because everyone was expected to go to college, “everyone took physics,” noted the class of 1958 valedictorian Kathy Dunn Jackson, and “everyone took math [through their senior year].” “We didn’t have a choice,” she added. Students who excelled in a particular subject had access to the college professors. The involvement and availability of the college professors were frequently cited in the oral histories of the former Lab High students. Alfred C. Henry, the Lab High physics teacher from 1943 to 1969, was also a full-time employee of Alabama State College and “went to the Lab High every day to teach physics.” Henry remarked about the strength of the curriculum, “Our graduates never had to take remedial classes when they went to college,” which had been a common occurrence with Black students coming


151 Wilson, personal written communication to the author, November 2008.

152 K. Jackson, discussion.

153 Glaze, discussion; Wilson, discussion. This was mentioned by a number of former students. President Trenholm also mentioned access to college resources as one of the advantages of being a Laboratory High School Student in the “Laboratory School Student Handbook,” 5.

154 The remembrances of students taking “advantage of using college professors as resources” were repeated by multiple Lab High graduates. King, discussion; J. Winston, discussion, among many others.

155 Alfred C. Henry, written communication to author, October 2008.
from the Black public schools. This was affirmed by the former graduates of Lab High. “I went to several schools [higher educational institutions] after I left Lab High,” stated a 1954 graduate. “I wasn’t at the top academically at Lab High, but I had no fear of going to any school and doing well because of how I was prepared at Lab High.”

Lab High’s mission and commitment to prepare all of its students for successful college careers were sometimes criticized by outside educators. The SACS evaluating team stated that Lab High should not require all students to take college preparatory courses. “If, as stated in the philosophy, the aim of the school is to perpetuate and strengthen the democratic way of life,” the evaluators reasoned, “then it follows that the school need not consider preparation for college as restriction upon the types of experiences that shall prevail in the classroom.” The outside evaluators asserted that students should be able to opt out of the college track. This way, they claimed, “they will be prepared for whatever may follow in life, be it further education or ‘real life.’”

Specific recommendations were given to Lab High for improvement in its industrial arts program. An overarching recommendation was “that more boys be encouraged to take industrial arts.” Lab High offered an industrial arts class only as an “exploratory” class. Building on the notion of suitability of industrial arts courses for boys, the evaluators also recommended “that the [industrial arts] program be expanded in scope so that more boys will be attracted to the program.” Other recommendations included an adjustment to the mathematics and science curricula for those students who “do not need college preparatory courses.”

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156 Henry, discussion.
157 W. Winston, discussion.
159 Ibid., 39.
160 Ibid., 55. [My emphasis]
161 Ibid., 57, 59-60.
It was an accurate observation that not everyone had an aptitude for the required advanced-level courses in mathematics, physics, and chemistry. Keeping up with the daily assignments was paramount. The “whole class suffered if one person didn’t have his work done,” remembered the graduates, so students would tutor or “peer teach” to make sure everyone could keep up.162 Those students who were exceptional such as Quiester Craig and Prince Winston Armstrong, offered tutoring assistance to fellow classmates. It was a regular occurrence at Lab School. Armstrong, considered one of the “smartest” in her class and who went on to earn her Ph.D. in mathematics, regularly helped her fellow students—“it [peer teaching] was expected.”163 Both the students and teachers agreed that there were multiple benefits derived from this practice such as increasing the mastery of the subject for the tutor, being enlightened by a different explanation for the learner, and strengthening the relationships among the students, as well as the community as a whole.

At the time William Winston remembered feeling “bothered by the high expectations of the teachers.”164 “I wasn’t one of the brightest in the school,” he confessed, so he worked hard and relied on tutoring to keep up.165 After earning two masters’ degrees and enjoying a successful career as a teacher and Veterans administrator, in his retirement William Winston helped launch the “P-16 Initiative,” a tutoring and summer program intended to support and “motivate” students to “take college preparatory courses in high school so they’ll be ready and more likely to attend college.”166 Winston reported that he encouraged the “same high expectations” that he learned at Lab High. “I don’t let up,” he said.167 As Winston reflected on his education, he revealed that his Lab High education had a great influence on him. For instance, he explained

162 Jordan, discussion.
164 W. Winston, discussion.
165 Ibid.
166 Ibid.
that the P-16 Initiative was another example of how Lab High graduates were compelled to make a difference in their communities by stepping up and making things happen. “That’s what we were taught,” he declared proudly.

Winston’s recollections of the high expectations were corroborated by each of the former Lab High students. It was also highlighted in the Laboratory High School Home Room Guidance Program as a directive to the teachers and as a description of the core program. “Students are expected to maintain exceptionally high standards of achievement in English Fundamentals in all classes,” it stated. Also included in the Guidance Program was the directive that “Good discipline should be considered a product of good teaching.” This mantra was clearly evident at Lab High and in the eyes of the former students, contributed to the success of the school.

Strict adherence to the rules went hand-in-hand with the high expectations. “We had rules you were expected to follow,” stated Ethel Moss Bell, Lab High alumna, educator, and guidance counselor for thirty-seven-years. “There was no fighting or big problems with behaviors, it just didn’t happen.” Students simply “brooked no thought of misbehavior.” Teachers would not hesitate visiting a student’s home to talk with her parents about less than ideal classroom behavior. “Mr. Stout got on the bus one afternoon and drove across town to

168 W. Winston, discussion.

169 Ibid.


171 Ibid., 24.

172 King, discussion. Every collected oral history reported of the strict but loving discipline, considered part of the high expectation to do one’s best. Cf. Adam Fairclough, A Class of Their Own: Black Teachers in the Segregated South (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2007), 289-291.

173 Ethel Moss Bell, in discussion with the author, September 2008/March 2011.

174 Thomas, discussion.

175 McPherson, discussion.
speak to my mother and tell her that [your daughter] is a good student, but she talks too much in my class,” shared a former student. “Well you know,” she concluded, “once my teacher spoke to my mother, my talking days were over.” Other oral histories confirmed this level of dedication of the teachers to go beyond the four walls of the classroom to reach out to their students.

A common theme when it came to describing the teachers was the observation of and appreciation for the lessons they were taught that went beyond reading, writing, and arithmetic. Betty Gordon Seymour, a Lab High graduate who went on to become a school psychologist with a master’s degree in education, remembered that the “small class settings” ensured that each student “got a lot of individual attention” from the teachers. One graduate recalled the lecture she got when the teacher discovered that she and her group of friends were rushing home to watch the television show The Little Rascals. “My teacher gave us a burning report on why we should not watch it,” she recollected, adding “she explained to us about how it was demeaning.” The student recalled that although she continued to watch it occasionally, she watched with a new perspective.

When Lab High graduates were asked about the principal, a broad smile would stretch across their faces when they recalled the “revered Mr. Coston.” Wellington H. Coston was the Principal of Lab High in the 1950s and into the 1960s. Described as a small man with a soft voice, “he never spoke above a whisper” and “commanded universal reverence.” "W. H. Coston—We used to say that his initials stood for Work Hard,” noted a former student from the Class of 1965. “When we changed classes,” reminisced another student, “we wouldn’t say a

176 King, discussion.
177 Betty Gordon Seymour (Lab High graduate, M.A., psychometrist, school psychologist), in discussion with the author, September 2008/March 2011.
178 Ibid.
179 Ibid.
180 Ibid.
word. He would signal us to come to him without uttering a sound.”¹⁸¹ One student from the class of 1950 remembered that they would privately call him “Mighty Mouse”—he was small, smart, and powerful.¹⁸² “He was also a great biology and chemistry teacher,” a former student added.¹⁸³ “I did really well with those classes [in college] because of Mr. Coston’s teaching in high school,” she affirmed.¹⁸⁴

In the 1940s the Lab High principal Dr. Theodore A. Love similarly commanded respect and demanded respectful behavior in return. John Winston recalled that Dr. Love was caring, but tough. “When Dr. Love found out that we got dropped off for school very early, he let us in the building so we could do our work before school started,” Dr. Winston recalled. But Winston emphasized that the principal expected perfect conduct and good manners at all times.¹⁸⁵ Dr. Love had earned an A.B. from Talladega College, an M.A. from University of Michigan, and his Ph.D. from New York University.¹⁸⁶ Winston recalled that when Dr. Love discovered that a couple of the star basketball players had let their classwork slip, he “put them out,” even though it was during the championship. (He let them return to the team later.) Dr. Love’s message was that a Lab High education was about excelling in academics first, and then enjoying extracurricular activities.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸¹ King, discussion.

¹⁸² Thomas, discussion. The approach and effectiveness of the Lab High principals stand in contrast to those described in Fairclough, A Class of Their Own, 289-290.


¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ J. Winston, discussion.


¹⁸⁷ J. Winston, discussion.
Extracurricular Activities – Special Electives

The extracurricular activities at Alabama State College Laboratory School were an important and vibrant part of the students’ high school experiences. Lab High School’s *Homeroom Guidance Program* stated that “activities of our school” were meant “to help pupils realize that a wholesome, productive, well-rounded life in a democracy includes self-realization, human relationship, economic efficiency and civic responsibility.” These “activities” included both the academic core college preparatory program and the extracurricular activities. President H. C. Trenholm believed, as did the teachers, that extracurricular activities offered a brilliant opportunity for self-expression, individual distinction, and cooperative creativity. Ever present on Trenholm’s agenda was advancing African Americans’ opportunities through education and enrichment.

“By virtue of the fact that the Alabama State College Laboratory School was located on the college campus and in the building which contained the college auditorium,” Trenholm noted in his Administrative Report, “pupils enjoyed the advantage of sharing the lyceums, plays, and musical performances sponsored by the college and by community agencies.”

“We had the president of the university who was always looking out for us [and] was internationally known,” stated Richard Jordan a 1954 graduate. “He could recruit the top talent to come visit our school and we were always included,” Jordan said proudly, adding “This was the kind of exposure we got all the time.” Interacting with the college students was considered exciting and inspiring. “We had college boys participate in the same play with us,” recalled

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190 Jordan, discussion.

191 Ibid.
Robert Nesbitt, class of 1953, such as “Ralph Abernathy.” In other performances, advanced musical students were invited to join the college-level ensembles. “I played in the college band when I was in high school,” noted Grace King Glaze. Numerous examples of the college president welcoming the laboratory school students’ attendance at college-level activities were presented in the oral histories.

In a study conducted by Robert Clinton Hatch in 1945, as part of his doctoral dissertation from Teachers College, Columbia University, Hatch noted major events and activities that influenced Lab High students and others throughout the state. Framed as “services to the Negro schools and teachers of Alabama,” Hatch asserted that the college-hosted events had a lasting impact on education. Chief among them were the following:

1. A state-wide academic meet for high school seniors ranking in the upper third of their classes with provision for a general ability test for all high school seniors.

2. An annual Older boys and Girls Reserves Conference with participation by student groups from high schools throughout Alabama.

3. The sponsorship in Alabama of the district and state eliminations for the National Elks Oratorical Contests. Several Alabama high school graduates have been the recipients of the $1000.00 scholarship awarded annually to the national oratorical contest winner.

4. The sponsorship of the district and state songfest occasion in cooperation with the Division of Negro Education of the State Department of Education.

5. The sponsorship in cooperation with the Division of Negro Education of the State Department of Education, of a two-day professional conference of principals and Jeanes teachers.

6. The sponsorship of state-wide tournaments in basketball, of an all-state high school football game with seniors from the various high schools as the participants on a North Alabama-South Alabama rival basis, and of a state inter-scholastic track meet.

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192 Nesbitt, discussion.

193 Glaze, discussion.

7. The sponsorship of annual teachers institutes in the various school systems of the state.\textsuperscript{195}

Former Lab High students’ remembrances corroborated Hatch’s assertions in this regard.\textsuperscript{196} The associated message that the Lab High students conveyed was the tremendous influence these enriching experiences had on their lives. “I still draw on today what I learned at Lab High,” declared Carolyn Jackson, 1951 Lab High graduate and retired school principal.\textsuperscript{197} “The school was a cultural center for us,” Kathy Dunn Jackson stated. “We can’t emphasize enough the role that President Trenholm made in making the campus available to us,” Jackson affirmed.\textsuperscript{198}

Distinct from interacting with the college activities, Lab High encouraged and supported high school club activities for the development of the students, several of which had “evolved as outgrowths of certain phases of the curriculum, such as science, home economics, music, and physical education.”\textsuperscript{199} Clubs and organizations included the Dramatic Club, Debating Society, Hi-Y, Y-Teens, Science Club, National Honor Society, Library, Student Publication, Student Council, and the National Honor Society (NHS). NHS induction was celebrated with great honor and ceremony. Students were expected to wear gowns and suits. “It was a formal evening—very special,” the former students recalled.\textsuperscript{200} In addition, students were invited to participate in

\textsuperscript{195} Ibid.\textsuperscript{196} Hatch’s dissertation was intended to formulate a plan for improving the “in-service teacher education” program offered through State Teachers College, Montgomery, Alabama. Borrowing heavily from H. C. Trenholm’s reports to the ASTA on the needs and status of Black teachers in Alabama, Hatch presented recommendations for an improved plan for in-service teacher certification and education that was based on the core program model at Alabama State Teachers College, and designed to be implemented in “extension” programs.

\textsuperscript{197} C. Jackson, discussion.\textsuperscript{198} K. Jackson, discussion.\textsuperscript{199} \textit{SACS Report of Evaluating Committee}, 63.\textsuperscript{200} McPherson, discussion; Norman, discussion.
extracurricular courses and athletic activities such as taking music lessons through the college, participating in basketball, track, and tennis, and using the college’s gym.

Beyond these organized classes and clubs, the Lab School students also had daily religious devotion and “weekly assemblies” where all of the students in the laboratory school would gather to hear presentations. It was an honor to be selected to be one of the speakers for special assemblies and programs. Dr. Quiester Craig, who attended Lab School from elementary school through high school, maintained the highest grade point average in his class, earning him the honor one year of being selected to present “I’m Proud to be a Negro.” Jessica Pettus Rankins, who earned her master’s degree at Teachers College, Columbia University, earned the ranking among the girls. Linda Wilson remembered how students strove to have the honor of being selected to recite a poem, sing, or speak at one of the assemblies. “If you were going to recite at one of the assemblies, you had to compete to be the one chosen,” she vividly recalled. Wilson, who went on to earn two masters’ degrees and become a school principal, was selected to recite the poem “I Live for Those Who Love Me,” the poem traditionally performed as part of the celebration of Founder’s Day, one of the biggest events of the year. Wilson divulged that she was still proud of that today, the sense of empowerment staying with her for years.

“Negro History and Culture” and the “Challenge of Democracy”

Overwhelmingly, the theme of high expectations and a sense of privilege, prestige, and appreciation for the rich educational experiences was reported in the collected oral histories from Lab High graduates ranging from the 1940s to the 1960s. Another constant thread was the

202 Craig, in discussion with the author, August 2011.
203 J. Rankins, in discussion with the author, March 2011.
204 Wilson, discussion.
students’ pride and affirmation of their African American culture and heritage. Throughout the curriculum was an integration of African American “history and culture.”\textsuperscript{205}

While “Negro History Week” was recognized and celebrated at Lab High, testimonies from the former students asserted that African Americans’ contributions to society and the nation were regularly woven throughout their studies.\textsuperscript{206} “Black history’ was every day,” reported a 1958 graduate.\textsuperscript{207} In addition to learning Shakespeare, “we learned about Black writers,” recalled a former graduate who chose to pursue a professional career in education, ultimately earning her Ph.D. in Curriculum and Teaching.\textsuperscript{208} “We were required to memorize quotes from literary works and from the Bible.”\textsuperscript{209} And she clarified the point. “We didn’t just have to memorize something for the sake of memorizing; we had to understand the context.”\textsuperscript{210} This way the students would not just be parroting phrases from famous works, but engaging in the author’s message. Another former student, Judge McPherson, recollected:

At Lab High European culture was not denigrated, and I don’t think it should ever be because it informs us.... We were taught to recognize the value and the worth of all of it.... I revered Shakespeare by the time I graduated from high school.... But I also revered Langston Hughes.... It’s the dual track that is what integration was supposed to be about in the first place.\textsuperscript{211}


\textsuperscript{206} For example, H. Johnson, discussion; W. Winston, discussion; Norman, discussion; McPherson, discussion. Also see T. A. Love, Principal, State Teachers College Laboratory Schools, “Report to C. M. Dannelly, Superintendent, Montgomery Public Schools: A Narrative Report on Progress of Work During the Year 140-1941,” (n.d.), 3.

\textsuperscript{207} King, discussion.

\textsuperscript{208} Hightower, discussion.

\textsuperscript{209} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{210} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{211} McPherson, discussion.
One graduate observed that the first time she had read W.E.B. Du Bois’s *The Souls of Black Folk*, she was struck with the authenticity of his words and the notion that seemed to match her upbringing and education at Lab High. She shared that, in hindsight, it was the notion of dual citizenship that now seemed evident and was one of the richest gifts her education at Lab High gave her. “They were preparing us to live in that duality, to understand dual consciousness and to not allow it to be an impediment,” she asserted. “Their pedagogy was out of the *Souls.*” Norman declared, adding “[the teachers] had lived the book.”

Richard Jordan, Lab School student, 1942 to 1954, member of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church and civil rights activist, remembered his social studies teacher Mrs. Faustine Dunn, starting every class with the bold statement, “Class, we are living in a changing society.” There was no doubt that they were, and their social studies class provided the forum for Lab High students to grapple with the issues of democracy and the dual world they faced as African Americans living in a legally segregated society.

The post-World War II climate of social change could be felt at home in Montgomery, Alabama. In 1951 Vernon Johns served as the controversial leader of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church. His niece Barbara Johns also attracted controversy of her own, miles away in Virginia. Barbara Johns, a sixteen-year-old high school student, took a stand against the grossly unequal and unjust practices of the Prince Edward County Board of Education. She led her classmates in a massive protest, attracting attention to the school’s poor facilities. As a result, Barbara Johns was tormented by threats launched by the White supremacists in Virginia. In the quiet of the night, she left her home in Farmville and arrived clandestinely in Montgomery,

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212 Norman, discussion. The “dual citizenship” of which she speaks is a central theme in Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*.

213 Jordan, discussion.

214 Johns was known for his controversial sermons and distinctive business pursuits, which garnered strong supporters and detractors in both the Black and White community. For more about Vernon Johns, see Tonya Bolden, *Strong Men Keep Coming: The Book of African American Men* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1999).
enrolling in Alabama State College Laboratory School to finish out her high school education in 
relative anonymity.\textsuperscript{215}

Johns’\textquoteright s efforts were ultimately supported by the NAACP and bundled with four other 
similar cases that were brought to the U.S. Supreme Court and referred to as \textit{Brown v Board of 
Education of Topeka, Kansas}. Thurgood Marshall and his team of NAACP lawyers argued the case before the Court, a case that had been building up for years under the brilliant leadership of Charles Hamilton Houston. In a unanimous ruling on May 17, 1954, the Court pronounced, “We 
conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place. 
Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.”\textsuperscript{216} Marshall and the NAACP were 
victorious. \textsuperscript{217}

In the early 1950s, “all of our parents belonged to the NAACP,” Jordan recollected.\textsuperscript{218} 
Membership lists were not publicly displayed; teachers “had to be very, very quiet.”\textsuperscript{219} 
Mrs. Faustine Dunn, founding member of the Women’s Political Council, and active member of

\textsuperscript{215} For more about Barbara Johns and the Prince Edward County, Virginia case, see Robert Collins Smith, \textit{They Closed Their Schools: Prince Edward County, Virginia 1951-1964} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). As Taylor Branch put it in his Pulitzer-winning study, “The case remained muffled in white 
consciousness, and the school child origins of the lawsuit were lost as well on nearly all Negroes outside Prince 
Edward County.... The idea that non-adults of any race might play a leading role in political events had simply failed 
to register on anyone—except perhaps the Klansmen who burned a cross in the Johns’ yard one night, and even then people thought their target might not have been Barbara, but her notorious firebrand uncle.” See Branch, \textit{Parting the 

\textsuperscript{216} \textit{Brown v. Board of Education}.

\textsuperscript{217} For a thorough examination of the legal journey to \textit{Brown}, see Martin, \textit{Brown v. Board}; Richard Kluger, 
\textit{Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America’s Struggle for Equality} (New York: 

\textsuperscript{218} Jordan, discussion.

\textsuperscript{219} K. Jackson, discussion. Jackson, a daughter of a Lab High teacher, recounted conversations with retired 
teachers regarding NAACP meetings, Women’s Political Council meetings, and the like.
the Alabama State Teachers Association, would have been among the members who voted to donate $5,000 to the NAACP’s legal team in support of the cause.\footnote{ATA Gives $5,000.}

Also in this period in 1955 within blocks of the front lawn of Lab School, a demure Montgomery citizen made history with a simple act of civil disobedience. Rosa Parks, a seamstress and member of the NAACP since 1943, refused to give her seat to a White man.\footnote{Rosa Parks attended Alabama State Normal Laboratory School for a number of weeks during the summer of 1921 while her mother renewed her teaching license at the Teacher Institute. Her mother, Leona Edwards, was the only teacher at Spring Hill. See \textit{Rosa Parks: My Story} by Rosa Parks and Jim Haskins (New York: Puffin Books, 1992).}

This initiated one of the most famous protests in United States history, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, led by E.D. Nixon, the Women’s Political Council, and other members of the NAACP, with a new, local minister as its spokesperson, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.\footnote{Jo Ann Robinson, professor of English at Alabama State College, initiated the first effort to boycott the busses on May 21, 1954, four days after the \textit{Brown} ruling. See \textit{The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Women Who Started It: the Memoir of Jo Ann Gibson Robinson}, David J. Garrow, ed. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1987).}

From December 5, 1955 to December 21, 1956, Montgomery’s Black citizens boycotted the city busses, crippling the White-owned bus companies. After 381 days of Montgomery’s African American citizens walking, carpooling, and battling daily harassment and multiple court cases, the Supreme Court ruled that segregation on public transit buses was unconstitutional.\footnote{The District Court ruled in June 1956 “the enforced segregation of Negro and white passengers on motor buses operating in the City of Montgomery violates the Constitution and laws of the United States.” On November 13, 1956, the United States Supreme Court held up that ruling. \textit{Gayle v. Browder}, 352 U.S. 903. However, the Montgomery Improvement Association advised that the bus boycott should continue until the ruling officially reached the Montgomery courts. (The Supreme Court had ruled almost ten years earlier that de jure segregation on interstate buses was unconstitutional.) See Manning Marable, \textit{Race, Reform, and Rebellion} (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007).}

This was the changing society in which Mrs. Dunn taught her students in Montgomery, Alabama, situated right in the eye of the brewing civil rights storm in the 1950s. Lab High students lived in a changing society and faced the challenge of democracy everyday. Yet, largely
due to the caliber of training at Lab High, amidst these whirlwinds of change, the environment at the all-Black laboratory high school was generally calm and satisfying.

While Lab School “was a very sheltered experience,” John Winston recollected, growing up in Montgomery’s segregated society was “scary all of the time for us. We were always careful about what we were saying or how we acted,” so our demeanor did not threaten the Whites. “The fountains were marked and we were always careful not to get too near the wrong fountain,” let alone drink from it. But within that milieu, “we went to school in a very protective environment,” John Winston stated. While they were acutely aware of the racial injustice of the South’s segregated and racist society, Lab High students were also keenly aware that they were privileged. “Even though there were serious Jim Crow laws that defined you in one way … we did not let that define us,” asserted Georgette Norman. Students were well aware of the inequities associated with the local public “Black school” where students had to use the “old second hand books.”

They were certain that their education at Lab High was just as good, if not better than what was offered at the “best” local White school.

The laboratory school had a long history of progressive leadership. Being part of a teachers college, it took advantage of its purpose and “position to do pioneer work in experimentation and research” in teaching and curriculum development. Even in the 1950s, it enjoyed a leeway or “freedom” to design the curriculum and classroom activities that suited their needs.

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224 Jordan, discussion.

225 In discussion with the author, McPherson stated: “If Mrs. Dunn said it one time, she must have said it a hundred times and I can quote her because she said it so much, ‘They aren’t doing anything at Lanier that we aren’t doing here.’ … Our teachers would express disdain to the whole idea of integrating and going to Lanier … because we were doing at Lab High almost everything they were doing; and we were doing some things they wouldn’t dare do.” McPherson, Norman, Jordan, among numerous others, discussions.


The social studies text Mrs. Faustine Dunn selected for her students was *The Challenge of Democracy*, inspired by Harold Rugg's pedagogy found in *Man and His Changing Society*, and utilizing the social reconstructionist approach to teaching social studies.\(^{228}\) “I don’t remember what the public schools were using for their book, but I know it wouldn’t have been what we were learning from,” stated Richard Jordan.\(^{229}\) Jordan was correct. The Montgomery schools’ high school social studies text was not *The Challenge of Democracy*. In fact, it was during this time that the Alabama State Legislature passed Act No. 888, also known as “the Textbook Law.” It required “publishers offering textbooks for adoption in the public schools of the State [of Alabama] to certify to the Board that the contents of said offerings did not contain subversive teachings, as well as certifying that said offerings were not developed by authors, editors, or illustrators who belong to the Communist Party, etc.”\(^{230}\) Alabama’s textbook law reflected the conditions in the 1950s.\(^{231}\) The text that Lab School used was not a book that couched the challenges of democracy in patriotic lore. It confronted such societal issues as prejudice, fear, economic instability, and oppression head on—an effective tool for Mrs. Dunn’s lessons in her social studies classes on the changing society.

*The Challenge of Democracy* was written to problematize the challenges facing a nation with a diverse citizenry. It offered a dynamic democratic philosophy in a clear, youth-friendly


\(^{229}\) Jordan, discussion.

\(^{230}\) “Nonadopted Textbooks Approved For Use in Certain City School Systems,” Minutes of the State Board of Education of Alabama, June 17, 1953, Montgomery, Alabama, box Dept. of Education, Meeting Agenda and Minutes, 1936-1956, SG20903, ADAH. Also see State Board of Education Minutes, April 12, 1954, SG20903, ADAH.

\(^{231}\) The “Textbook Law” was news in Montgomery and throughout Alabama, covered in the *Montgomery Advertiser*. See, among others, “Education Board Meeting for Study of ‘Textbook’ Law,” *Montgomery Advertiser*, April 12, 1954. The law was eventually overturned in response to the threatening lawsuits presented by the publishing companies.
manner. The chapter titles reflected the 1930s social reconstructionist approach—to have faith in the promise and potential of democracy, while actively challenging the aspects of American social practices and policies that conflicted with those ideals. The text encouraged active engagement in social issues, with a central message of the importance of social justice for all of America’s citizens.

The Challenge of Democracy had earned positive reviews. The School Review called it “an outstanding textbook in American problems.” It was organized in twelve units, thirty-five chapters, and “probed the areas of sociology, economics, and government.” One of the chapters was entitled “Racial Persecution and Intolerant Discrimination Have No Place in a Democracy.” The opening argument of the chapter challenged the very core of Southern White supremacy. It read, “One of the most dangerous doctrines let loose in the modern world is that of racial superiority…. The Ku Klux Klan … appeals to the ignorant, the disgruntled, the low-income groups, and the unemployed.”

It was in Mrs. Dunn’s classroom that issues of the changing society intersected with academics. Mrs. Dunn required her social studies students to take a multi-pronged approach to learning about the nation’s democratic practices and social structures. In addition to turning to the appropriate chapter for the lesson of the week in The Challenge of Democracy, Dunn required her students to be familiar with the local news, daily, and to read and report weekly on a topic found in a state or national newspaper article. Consequently, Lab High students, especially

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232 Ronald B. Edgerton, “The Future Belongs to Youth. Review of The Challenge of Democracy, by T. Blaich and J. Baumgartner. School Review 51, no. 33 (March, 1943): 188-190, 188. Harold Rugg’s social studies text and curriculum pamphlets were immensely popular upon their release. However, the social reconstructionist approach to teaching social studies fell out of favor with the onset of WWII and the associated groundswell to present unified support of the nation in the name of democracy. Criticizing or challenging the nation’s policies was no longer acceptable. Lab High, though, continued to use this social reconstructionist text through the 1950s.

233 Edgerton, “Future Belongs to Youth,” 188.

234 Ibid., 189.

in the 1950s and 1960s, were actively grappling with issues of social justice and democracy in their social studies classroom.\textsuperscript{236}

Of the newspapers available, the \textit{Montgomery Advertiser} was widely read and respected. It served as the primary source of news for Montgomery citizens. No other daily or weekly paper came close to their circulation numbers.\textsuperscript{237} The paper devoted one page to “Negro News.” Articles from the period reflected the culture of mid-twentieth century Montgomery. “Three stars were placed on the front page of those editions that carried the ‘Negro News.’ Whites did not want that section,” explained Craig and Jordan, Lab High classmates and paperboys for their community.\textsuperscript{238} The \textit{Montgomery Advertiser}’s “Negro News” was used by the African American community to “spread the word.”\textsuperscript{239} It also printed the all too common racist editorials and efforts of the “White Citizens Council.”\textsuperscript{240} This would have been the primary local newspaper that Lab School students were reading everyday at home with their families and reporting about in class.

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\item[\textsuperscript{237}] The \textit{Montgomery Advertiser} reported a circulation of nearly 57,000 in 1951 and 66,000 in 1959. Their Sunday circulation enjoyed greater reach: 72,000 in 1951 and 79,000 in 1959. See “Alabama official and statistical Register 1951/1955/1959,” http://www.archives.alabama.gov/, ADAH.
\item[\textsuperscript{238}] Craig and Jordan, discussion.
\item[\textsuperscript{239}] Jordan, discussion; W. Winston, discussion.
\item[\textsuperscript{240}] For more on the editorial choices of the \textit{Montgomery Advertiser}, see Allen Cronenberg, \textit{Forth to the Mighty Conflict: Alabama and World War II} (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1995), 65. For a discussion of the \textit{Advertiser}’s coverage of Black news during segregation, see Sharon G. Pierson, “Class, We Are Living in a Changing Society” (paper presented at the Organization of Educational Historians, Chicago, Illinois , OEH annual meeting, October 2010). For more on the Montgomery bus boycott news coverage and evolution of how Blacks were treated in the \textit{New York Times}, see Craig Flournoy, “Reporting the Movement in Black and White: The Emmett Till Lynching and the Montgomery Bus Boycott” (Ph.D. diss., Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, August 2003), 110-152, 166-185.
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Another paper used in Dunn’s classroom was the *New York Times*, the “most powerful editorial voice in the nation,” which was delivered to the college weekly. While the Lab School students did not recall the specific articles discussed each week, the *New York Times* had responded to *Brown v. Board of Education* by running a number of editorials throughout the decade. It also covered the bus boycott. In February 1956, it ran an article, “Negro Leaders Arrested in Alabama Bus Boycott.” By 1960 the *Times* was sued for libel by the Montgomery city commissioners for running a full-page advertisement entitled “Heed Their Rising Voices.” This advertisement was based on the editorial, of the same title. It called for support for Dr. King and for the “struggle for Freedom in the South.” These would have likely been among the kinds of articles discussed in Mrs. Dunn’s social studies class.

Amidst these changing times in the 1950s, the Lab High students recalled that in every class, it was about remaining focused on the subject at hand. The students emphasized that daily lessons were not filled with discussion of segregation issues and their White supremacist neighbors. “That was all a part of our lives that we lived every minute of every day,” stated Professor K. Jackson, Dean Q. Craig, and others. It was talked about at home, with friends, and in clubs, and read about in the newspapers. “I was a member of Dr. King’s church,” explained Lab High student Peggy Taylor, “so every Sunday you got a rousing, wonderful sermon about it.

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When we were in class, we focused on the subject,” stated Dr. Jackson. “It wasn’t the time to rehash what was going on outside.”

Deemed the best way to prepare Lab School students for the imminent changing society, Mrs. Dunn wanted to ensure that they were well prepared in each subject and could academically compete as they continued their education. The lessons in the classroom, beyond the specifics of the subject matter, such as diagramming sentences or factoring algebraic equations were not about the latest on the bus boycott. They were about “self-realization,” “leadership,” “cooperative strategies,” “self-directed problem solving,” and “civic responsibility.” “We had a set of values that were so strong—they were our guiding force,” declared Rosalyn King.

Lab School’s distinction, beyond being a supportive community within a segregated society, was affording its students the opportunity for academic achievement. It is striking to consider the rich academic experiences of these laboratory high school students as captured in their oral histories, documented in archives from the period, and analyzed in scholarly studies, compared to the historical accounts of secondary schooling under the regime of Jim Crow segregation and the disconcerting financial woes Black college administrators faced.

Lab High was ranked in “the highest class of schools as listed by the State Department of Education.” It was perceived as a “dream school” by its former students, one that “was ahead of its time.” Lab High’s diverse student demographics provided opportunities for academic

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245 Peggy Taylor, discussion.

246 K. Jackson, Craig, Norman, King, among others, discussions with the author.

247 “Homeroom Guidance Committee” (1953), 4.


249 King, discussion.


251 Wilson, discussion.
growth through a teaching model that offered “individualized education of the whole individual.” \(^{252}\) “When I went on to earn my advanced degrees in education,” recalled Willodean Malden, “we were taught how to individualize instruction,” which was presented as a new concept. “It was not new to me. I had learned all of this as a student at Lab High.” \(^{253}\) Malden added, “I always remember that each of us had an opportunity to do what we needed / could do.” \(^{254}\)

The core program was a comprehensive college preparatory, liberal arts curriculum taught by professional educators who challenged the students to do their individual best, while also encouraging cooperative learning. “My greatest education was at Lab High,” stated William Winston. \(^{255}\) While an evaluating committee recommended that a “non-college” track be incorporated in the curriculum, the former students of Lab High cited the high expectations of the teachers and the “automatic assumption that everyone [would go] to college” as among the characteristics that made the Lab High education “superb.” \(^{256}\) “If you got to be a student at Lab High,” you were virtually guaranteed admission to college and a career that would place you in the middle class. \(^{257}\)

The president of the college from 1925 to 1962, H.C. Trenholm, was known as a “man who did for his college what Franklin Delano Roosevelt did for his country.” \(^{258}\) In addition to


\(^{253}\) Malden, discussion. This was also observed anecdotally by Helen Plump who recalled that Ms. Ollie Phillips “had her way of finding out what every child could do and what every child’s talent was.” Plump, discussion.

\(^{254}\) Ibid.

\(^{255}\) Ibid.

\(^{256}\) Wilson, discussion.

\(^{257}\) Winston family, in discussion with the author, March 2011.

\(^{258}\) Watkins, ASU History, 59.
dealing with the Great Depression and the effects of World War II, Trenholm developed an academically rich environment with limited support from a “state government that gave separate and unequal treatment to its black citizens.”

Living in the “Cradle of the Confederacy” was living in a dual world, one that was ever-present in the daily lives of the Lab High students. “Black men during that time and Black women,” Winston explained, “presented themselves the way the White people wanted to see them,” pausing, he quietly added, “‘We Wear the Mask,’ by Paul Laurence Dunbar.” But at the laboratory high school, there was a “sense of belongingness that we had then,” Georgette Norman explained. Lab High, although housed in a building that was worn and in need of repair, was a dynamic learning center, located in the heart of the college campus and surrounded by a Black community. “We were sheltered,” “protected,” and “nurtured,” stated former students. “We belonged to the entire community,” declared Georgette Norman.

Expectations were high, not only to do well academically, but to commit to making a difference in society. “It was like the entire race depended on me,” stated Norman. Lab High had an established tradition of preparing students who entered college and went on to successful careers as teachers, principals, professors, deans, doctors, lawyers, and the like. Simply stated, “We were programmed to be exceptional leaders,” declared William Winston, the fourth of the Winston’s eight children, all of whom attended Lab High and excelled in their careers.

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259 Ibid.
260 All of the Lab High students’ oral histories reported these qualities, using these descriptive terms.
262 Ibid.
263 W. Winston, discussion.
Chapter VII

CONCLUSION

“Students were encouraged to excel and be change agents.”¹

Sitting in the Rosa Parks Museum in Montgomery, Alabama, in 2008, Quiester Craig and Georgette Norman engaged in an animated conversation with the author about the Montgomery bus boycott and its effects on Montgomery schools—the author’s original purpose of the exploratory trip to the birthplace of the modern civil rights movement.² In Norman’s recounting of her remembrances of the bus boycott, she mentioned “Lab High.” The mention of the high school got Craig’s attention, who turned with interest toward Norman and queried, “You went to Lab High?” adding, “So did I.” Smiles broadened on their faces, and the two successful scholars came alive with conversation about their alma mater, Alabama State College Laboratory High School. As the conversation developed, it was evident that they were talking about a distinctive education that provided them with a sure foundation on which they built their professional lives.

Having an interest in the history of African American education during de jure segregation, the author was aware of the hundreds of historical narratives that had captured the plight of Southern African Americans educated under the regime of legal segregation and the consequent disadvantage of underfunded schooling and oppressively proscribed and unequal curriculum

¹ Q. Craig, written communication to the author, October 2008/March 2011.

² In the second year of the bus boycott, Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. preached a sermon at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in which he proclaimed “the birth of a new age.” See James H. Cone, “Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Third World,” Journal of African American History74, no. 2 (September, 1987): 455-467, 456.
supposedly characterized by ill-trained teachers, narrow curricular offerings, insufficient materials, limited facilities, and impoverished school buildings. What also came to mind was the more recent work of Vanessa Siddle Walker, Vivian Morris and Curtis Morris, and others who brought to light, through case studies, their own schooling experiences and the associated value of being educated in a caring community.

Yet, here was a “laboratory” high school, described by its graduates as providing an excellent education “based on the teachings of Dewey and Du Bois,” with highly trained teachers, a comprehensive college-preparatory curriculum, including a variety of elective offerings, and nestled in the heart of a college campus. Historian David Cecelski’s encouragement to unearth the stories that “lie waiting, recorded only in the memories of participants”³ and Siddle Walker’s advice to “listen for the story within a story”⁴ reverberated in the author’s mind. The Alabama State College Laboratory High School represented a gem of an educational experience during the era of legal segregation. This was an un-mined diamond—a history of the rich legacy of Lab High and its untold narrative that deserved to be added among the “essential facts” of the historical narrative of African American education in the South.⁵

The laboratory high schools situated on the campuses of historically Black colleges and universities were highly valued and distinctive educational experiences.⁶ Their positive influences on Black education stretched statewide and in some cases were seen as having made a

³ Cecelski, Along Freedom Road, 13.


⁶ In addition to Alabama State College Laboratory School, the on-campus, “Class A” ranked laboratory high schools referenced in this study included the Atlanta University Laboratory High School, Georgia; Drewry Practice School, Alabama; Southern University and Agricultural and Mechanical College Demonstration School, Louisiana; and D. Webster Davis Laboratory School of Virginia State College for Negroes, Virginia. Other laboratory high schools that were recognized as progressive, well-structured programs and, accordingly, selected for the Secondary School Study for Negroes included Natchitoches Parish Training School, Louisiana; and Lincoln High School, Florida.
“priceless contribution to human progress.” The teachers of laboratory high schools served as models for the profession. Most Lab High teachers held graduate degrees, many from the top graduate programs in the nation, and often included professors at their respective colleges. Teachers from the lab schools attended national workshops held at leading universities, and brought back to the lab school what they had learned. With an aim to teach to the “whole” child, the laboratory schools maintained high expectations for academic achievement and conduct, befitting an individual destined to become a leader in the classroom and beyond. Located on college campuses, students and teachers were able to take advantage of the broader facilities offered at the institution.

By being associated with a college or university, laboratory schools were on a stage that reached a substantially greater audience than a neighborhood public school. The methods and productive outcomes from the experimentation and exploration conducted in these “laboratories” were able to be promoted by the presidents and other administrators at the college. Visitors came to observe this teaching and learning laboratory and took back to their own schools what they had learned. Lab teachers were also sent into the “field” to reach and teach other teachers. The parent institution’s student teachers regularly came through the laboratory classrooms as part of their core program, taking away a foundation for their future career.

The pupils of the laboratory high schools reaped the benefits of being in a “laboratory” associated with an HBCU. Lab high school students were educated in institutions that reflected the latest teaching philosophy, intended to enhance and enrich the students’ educational experiences to prepare them for success in college and their careers. As part of an HBCU, laboratory schools embraced the importance of integrating African American history and culture

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7 W. A. Bell (Miles College President, Birmingham, Alabama), to H. C. Trenholm on the occasion of Trenholm’s twenty-fifth anniversary as president of Alabama State Teachers College. See 1925 Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Letters 1950.

as an essential component to the curriculum. The schools expressed the objective of preparing students to face the dual realities of being productive citizens in a nation that struggled to realize the challenges of democracy and provide equal rights and privileges for all of its citizens.

Closer examination of Alabama State College Laboratory High School as a case study illuminates the rich heritage of the laboratory high school and its role in the development of African American education. Montgomery’s Lab High played a role in Black education within Alabama and throughout the nation. Its history is an integral part of the college’s history and is linked to the inimitable contributions of its presidents.

Under exemplary leadership during the crucial days of the college’s early development, the laboratory school was established as “the heart” of the institution, incorporating progressive teaching and curriculum methodologies. The work of H. Councill Trenholm, advancing Black education, was recognized by scholars of the period and in retrospect. Charles H. Thompson, Editor of The Journal of Negro Education and Dean at Howard University, declared that H. C. Trenholm’s “magnificent job” deserved “not only the thanks of the citizens of Alabama, but those of the nation as well.”

In the heart of the Deep South, in a state that was consistently ranked among the lowest state funding allocations for Black education, the Alabama State College Laboratory School made substantive inroads in advancing Black education for social and intellectual advancement. As part of the teachers college, the laboratory school largely escaped the scrutiny of the all-White local and state boards of education, as it rolled out a comprehensive college-preparatory, liberal arts education amidst intense pressures throughout the South to adopt a vocational or industrial arts curriculum.

Notwithstanding the daily hardships of a Jim Crow society, the Alabama State College Laboratory School created a “mode of social life” that challenged, celebrated, and empowered its

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9 1925 Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Letters 1950.
students as it prepared them for citizenship in a complex democratic society. Its extracurricular activities of academic competitions, classical dramatic productions, debating clubs, and athletic activities, to name a few, along with its core academic program, offered its students a well-rounded, multi-faceted education.

In 1940 models of educational opportunities for African Americans were studied by educational researcher Dr. Reid Jackson, secretary of the Southern Negro Conference for Equalization of Education Opportunities. In 1940 he contended that, while there was clear evidence of “flagrant violations of the American idea of equality of educational opportunity,” which resulted in “disparity between the educational facilities,” most notably between White and Black students, such data did not accurately capture the “whole story.” Jackson argued for an “enlarged” method for evaluating success in Black secondary education, taking into consideration “the needs of the group, individually and collectively.” Jackson encouraged the progressive approach of the “newer and more socialized forms of methodology in teaching.” In fact, what Jackson had recommended had been implemented at Lab High. It was a central thread of the cooperative aspect of the “Black High School Study” in which Lab High was a “member.”

Alabama State College Laboratory High School in Montgomery, was lauded for its emphasis on cooperative planning and learning. Lab High’s philosophy and objectives aimed to

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12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., 72.

14 See Robinson, “Co-operative Effort”; Sims, et al., “Experimental Programs.” For further discussion of Lab High’s role in the Secondary School Study for Negroes in the South, see Chapters III and V of this study.

provide an enriching, meaningful, and nurturing community in which students would have the opportunity for “optimum individual development and growth in social understandings and skills,” empowering them to be capable and active members of their democratic society, with a sense of a civic responsibility.\textsuperscript{16} The oral histories reported that the Laboratory School was a prestigious institution that provided an academically “rigorous” liberal arts college preparatory education to its students.\textsuperscript{17} With threads from the teachings of Dewey, Counts, and Rugg, Lab High’s program objectives, engagement in national studies, and students’ oral histories demonstrated its practice of cultivating individual intellectual discovery and personal self-realization, as well as developing a respect, appreciation, and responsibility for the school and the greater community. At Lab School, social studies classes grappled with the challenges of democracy, and “students were encouraged to excel and be change agents.”\textsuperscript{18}

The years of collaborative work and groundbreaking achievement of its president, H. C. Trenholm, to gain the cooperation and agreement of the National Education Association, the National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools (NATCS – later renamed the American Teachers Association, ATA), and the regional accreditation associations, especially the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (SACS), were considered by some scholars to be among the most important advances for Black secondary education in the twentieth century. These efforts gained the right for Black high schools to earn accreditation based on the same standards as any White school in its region. This was a courageous move, considering the gross inequities in state funding for Black and White education, which made the achievement of those Black high schools that earned the “Class A” accreditation all that much more admirable. The associated cooperative initiatives of the NEA and ATA also led to the study of Black education,

\textsuperscript{16}“Philosophy.” \textit{Laboratory High School Home Room Guidance Program}, 3-4.

\textsuperscript{17}K. Jackson, written communication.

\textsuperscript{18}Craig, written communication.
culture, and history, and the eventual merger of the two national teachers associations. The Alabama State College Laboratory High School was at every intersection.

Lab High in Montgomery was the first Black public high school in Alabama to be reviewed by SACS and earn a “Class A” accreditation. It was one of the sixteen schools from the Southern region of seventeen states to be selected to participate in the Secondary School Study for Negroes. One of seven laboratory schools in the study, Lab High accepted its responsibility to influence other schools in its state, region, and the nation. Laboratory schools were pioneers in education. For the student teachers who came through the school as part of their core program, the outside teachers who visited or for whom the Lab High teachers held workshops, and for the pupils of Lab High themselves, Lab High served its mission to educate at the highest level and inspire emulation and achievement. Its graduates entered colleges and universities, the vast majority earning degrees and becoming professional educators, doctors, lawyers, or business professionals. “We were the talented tenth,” declared 1954 Lab High graduate, William Winston.

The history of Alabama State College Laboratory High School, a missed chapter in historical analyses of Black secondary education, provides a “usable past.” There is more history to be mined and brought to light. In a study conducted by historian Aaron Brown in 1944, after having established that the HBCUs’ accredited laboratory high schools demonstrated a

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19 Davis, President, West Virginia State College, address to the National Association of Teachers in Colored Schools, 1931, as cited in Perry, History of ATA, 245; Brown, “Accredited Secondary Schools,” 199.

20 W. Winston, discussion.

21 Van Wyck Brooks has been credited with coining the term “usable past” in his 1918 essay, “On Creating a Usable Past,” Dial 64 (1918): 338. Brooks asserted that history can be interpreted in such a way as to construct a cultural identity, necessary when such identity might have been “disrupted” or usurped by other forces. Scores of scholars since have used the term in various applications. In response to the overwhelming number of references to inferior Black education and victimization, Joseph Moreau asserted that it was important for our history books to tell a story that would provide young African Americans with a “usable past that could uplift the community” and offer them “the means to repair their self-image and group consciousness.” See Joseph Moreau, Schoolbook Nation: Conflicts Over American History Textbooks from the Civil War to the Present (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 320.
higher level of performance and potential influence than other high schools, Brown concluded his study by recommending further research on the laboratory high schools’ potential to influence. Brown’s suggestion for further research has yet to be fully explored, providing opportunity for future research to help define the sphere of influence of Black laboratory schools.

Another aspect of research associated with Black laboratory schools is an analysis of what happened to these schools. With plentiful oral histories that proclaim the worth and contributions of these lab schools, why did these schools close? What factors led to their demise? Were they part of the wave that closed the [White] laboratory schools throughout the country, or were their experiences peculiar to HBCUs?

Other accredited laboratory high schools associated with HBUCs are ripe for examination. For example, Southern University Laboratory High School in Baton Rouge, Louisiana is still in existence, preparing its students for college, many of whom have come from a long legacy of former Southern Lab High graduates. Why has this laboratory high school survived?

Specific to Alabama State College Laboratory High School, research is called for that examines the final chapter of Lab High through the tumultuous years of the civil rights movement in Montgomery to its closing in 1969. Evidence suggests that the laboratory school students were not major activists during the movement. However, because Lab High was part of the college and located on the college campus, it suffered from the ramifications of the state’s

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24 Brenda Birkett (Southern University Laboratory High School graduate, B.S., Southern University; M.B.A. Atlanta University; Ph.D. Accounting, Louisiana State University), in discussion with the author, September 2011; Leonard L. Haynes (Southern University Laboratory High School graduate, B.A. Southern University; M.A. History, Carnegie-Mellon University; Ph.D. Higher Education, Ohio State University), in discussion with the author, August 2011; Southern University Laboratory School was originally named Southern University and Agricultural and Mechanical College Demonstration School.
censure of ASC’s faculty and student activism. In poor health and admonished by the state superintendent for not controlling his college students and faculty, H. C. Trenholm learned through a “radio news bulletin announcement” that the state board of education had directed him to take an unrequested sick leave effective December 31, 1961, and it named Robert Clinton Hatch acting president. By October 1, 1962, Levi Watkins replaced Hatch as president of Alabama State College. Harper Councill Trenholm died February 20, 1963. As part of the new president’s efforts to reorganize the college, Levi Watkins began to take steps to close Lab High in 1965. Lab High was officially “discontinued” in 1969, the same year Alabama State College became Alabama State University.

These final years of the laboratory school deserve a thorough examination. How were the Lab High students affected by the active role the college students played in the movement? How did the changing times affect the curriculum and teaching at Lab High? Did the move toward integration post-\textit{Brown} affect Lab High? Were the factors considered in the decision to close the laboratory school unique to Lab High in Montgomery or common to those that led to the closing of other all-Black public schools in Alabama or the Black or White laboratory high schools across the nation? How did the community respond to the closing of Lab High?

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\footnote{Following the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the civil rights movement gained momentum. February 25, 1960, twenty-nine Alabama State College students followed the example of the four North Carolina A&T College students and staged a sit-in at the Montgomery County Courthouse lunch counter. Within a week, over one thousand ASC students demonstrated at the steps of the State Capitol building, inspired by Martin Luther King, Jr.’s speech to them the night before encouraging student activism that could turn “this Cradle of the Confederacy upside down.” The campus of ASC became a hotbed of protests by students and reprisals by Whites. Watkins, \textit{ASU History}, 111.}

\footnote{Watkins, \textit{ASU History}, 119.}

\footnote{Gordon Sweet, Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, to Levi Watkins, 1966.}

\footnote{Levi Watkins Learning Center Archives and Special Collections, “Alabama State University, Time Line,” http://www.lib.alasu.edu/archives/research/history/timeline.html.}

\footnote{James Franklin Nicholas, “Professional Laboratory Experiences Provided in Teacher Education Programs by Negro College in Virginia and Nearby Areas” (EdD diss., The Pennsylvania State College, 1950), 228, 242.}
Another branch of research that would enhance our understanding and appreciation of Black secondary schooling in the first half of the twentieth century is an exploration and analysis of the extracurricular activities of Lab High. Why were these activities part of the proclaimed academically focused program? As a laboratory school on a college campus, how did its extracurricular activities enhance the relationship between the community and institution? What influence, if any, did the extracurricular activities have on the future educational aspirations and careers of its students?

Being a student at Lab High was a privilege and promise of a college education and professional career. Because it was a teachers college and “we were the ‘laboratory’ school,” Norman explained, “a lot was expected of us.” In the 1943 Lab High Yearbook, the senior class officers stated their ambitions, which included: “civilian aeronautical conductor,” “army pilot,” “physician,” “stenographer,” “doctor,” “pianist,” “aviator,” “teacher,” “artist,” and “lawyer.” These do not sound like ambitions of unfortunate victims of the racist South but, rather, individuals’ expressions of confidence in their education, empowerment, and hope for a meaningful career. “Still today,” Norman said, “folks will say, ‘Oh, you went to Lab High.’” Norman’s inference was that they had enjoyed a prestigious education, one that was still respected almost fifty years after Norman had graduated, and almost sixty for Craig. Lab High had influenced the lives of thousands of students over the years, as it played a central role in secondary education for African Americans in the first half of the twentieth century.

This study adds the voices of the Alabama State College Laboratory High School to the narrative of Black education history. It also takes a first step in bringing to light the role of Black laboratory high schools in the historiography of African American secondary education during the era of segregation.

30 Gopher 1943, Lab High Yearbook.
31 Norman, discussion.
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Appendix A: Names of the Institution

Lincoln Normal School (1867-1874)
State Normal School and University (1874-1887)
Alabama Colored People’s University (1887-1889)
Normal School for Colored Students and Teachers (1889-1928)
State Teachers College (1928-1946)
Alabama State College for Negroes (1946-1954)
Alabama State College (1954-1969)
Alabama State University (1969-present)
Appendix B: Traditional Counties of the Alabama Black Belt

\[\text{Diagram of Alabama counties}\]

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Solicited contributions and projects have been a conspicuous, appreciable and significant part of the acquisition of the present plant facility.

(1) The “old campus” site (north of Thurman Street) was a contribution of the Negro citizens back in 1887.

(2) The erection of the present Tullibody Hall on the “old campus” (as a replacement of the original frame building destroyed by fire in 1904) and the associated four frame structures) were financed to an appreciable extent by solicited contributions … respecting which the late President William Burns Paterson observed in his report of 1906 that out of an original grant of $15,000 from the legislature.

In 1888, the State of Alabama now has five small buildings and the new two-story Tullibody Auditorium as a plant valued at $45,000. The present two-story Tullibody Hall (including 14 classrooms and an auditorium) was erected in 1905 from contributions of $5000 from the colored citizens and from $17,514.50 collected as insurance from the previous frame structure, which had burned.

(3) Two additions of land … the blocks on which the president’s residence is located and an eighty-acre farm near the Montgomery-Tuskegee Highway and near the U. S. Veterans Hospital (which was sold in 1949) … were the result of solicited contributions during the administration (1915-1920) of the late President John W. Beverly.

(4) The partial cost of erection of the president’s residence and the original remodeling of Stewart Hall and of Dillard Hall were made possible by contributions solicited during the administration (1920-25) of the late President George W. Trenholm.

(5) The two new buildings erected in 1928 (Paterson Administration Classroom Building and Bibb Graves Dormitory for Women) were furnished through contributions of Alumni, students and friends (at $75 per room) as name plates over many of the door can attest.

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(6) Significant amounts have been contributed annually (usually on Founder’s Day) by alumni, students and friends to help in the construction of the Gymnasium, the Campus Center, the two frame buildings used for music instruction and an appreciable group of remodeling and improvement projects....

(7) Mobile branch ... beginning with the fall of 1936.

(8) The very significant annual solicitation-projects of the past three years have included the Wurlitzer electric Organ in the summer of 1948 and the installation of 1036 new cushion-seats in Tullibody Auditorium in the summer of 1949.

(9) The current project of these two years of 1950 and 1951 is the expansion of our physical education facilities to include a standard swimming pool (of A.A.U. dimensions), which will enable this college to offer a major in Physical Education.

(a) This project was initiated in February 1950 as a Diamond-Jubilee Anniversary-year effort for which about half of the needed amount is already in hand and toward which we continue our intensive solicitation efforts of 1951 as another NON-APPROPRIATION addition to our physical plant.

1927-1929 The Rosenwald Board contributed $21,632 to the major plant development of 1927-29 ... thus bringing up to $276,632 (FOURTEEN PERCENT) the amount which the State of Alabama has received from these two philanthropic agencies.

1930s Through the War-Emergency projects of the Federal Government, the State of Alabama has been the fortunate beneficiary to a very significant extent in the development of the plant facility of the Alabama State College for Negroses.

(1) Through the W.P.A., there was the major contribution of the Gymnasium and of the Athletic Field in addition to grading, paving, water-drainage culvert and appreciable remodeling of several existing structures.

(2) Through the NYA, there was the erection of the Maintenance Shop (Including installation of power equipment valued at $5,000) and of two duplex two-family faculty dwellings.

(3) Through the PWA, there was the grant of $45,000 toward the cost of erection of the Science and Health Building.

(4) Through the Bureau of Community Facilities, there was the razing, transfer and re-erection on the campus of three frame dormitory buildings and two frame classroom buildings (subsequently brick-veneered by the college) and the contribution of war-used lumber which the college utilized in the erection of a fourth veterans’ barracks FRAME DORMITORY (in which two faculty apartments are also provided) and in the erection of the frame CAMPUS CENTER.
1940s Through the student-fee assessment, the students have an appreciable share in the cost of erection of three structures of the past ten years.

(1) Amortization Bonds to the amount of $50,000 were sold to aid in the construction of the Science and Health Building ... to which the State of Alabama ultimately contributed $28,948.96 in the fall of 1946 just as Governor Sparks was completing his term of office.

(2) Amortization Bonds in the amount of $50,000 were sold to aid in the financing the cost of erection of the Library Building ... for which each college student at Montgomery pays a special fee of $2.50 each quarter.

1950s Dr. J. Henry Highsmith, Secretary of The Committee on Approval of Negro Schools for The Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools wrote:

At a meeting of the Committee on Approval of Negro Schools of the Southern Association in Richmond in December the report of Alabama State College was carefully considered ... [W]hen salaries of teachers alone are considered plus the sum spent on library or a total of $372,832.00 divided by the under-graduate enrollment of 2644, it shows an expenditure of $140.00 per student. We do not wish to make unfair comparisons or to pit one institution against another, but it seems that the A & M College spends for instructional purposes $243,971.00 for 1001 students or about $240.00 per year per student.

Dr. Calkins and Dr. McCuistion of The General Education Board visited the college and intimated their disposition to consider an application for a grant to aid in the improvement of the facilities of the Science Department and of the Library.... But which would probably be conditional upon the decision of the State of Alabama to make the appropriation more adequate for the magnitude of the college program (both as to enrollment and as to expanded curriculum).
Appendix D: Accredited Black High Schools

1. Margaret Barber Seminary, Anniston, Alabama
2. Burrell Normal Schools, Florence, Alabama
3. Alabama State Teachers college High School, Montgomery, Alabama
4. Alabama A&M College High School Department, Normal, Alabama
5. Tuskegee Institute High School Department, Tuskegee, Alabama
6. Booker T. Washington High School, Miami, Florida
7. Georgia N. & A. College High School Department, Albany, Georgia
8. Atlanta University Laboratory High School, Atlanta, Georgia
9. Paul Dunbar High School, Lexington, Kentucky
10. Tougaloo College High School Department, Tougaloo, Mississippi
11. Barber-Scotia College High School Department, Concord, North Carolina
13. Hillside Park High School, Durham North Carolina
14. Albion Academy, Franklinton, North Carolina
15. James B. Dudley High School, Greensboro, North Carolina
16. William Penn High School, High Point, North Carolina
17. Booker T. Washington High School, Raleigh, North Carolina
18. Palmer Memorial Institute, Sedalia, North Carolina
19. Atkins High School, Winston-Salem, North Carolina
20. Huntington High School, Newport News, Virginia

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Selection Criteria for Member Schools

1. At least one school should be chosen from each of the eleven states of the region.

2. The study should include a variety of types of high schools, such as large and small, urban and rural, schools serving industrial centers and schools serving agricultural centers, and laboratory schools with important teacher-training functions.

3. The schools need not be accredited by the Southern Association but should be strategically situated and have promise for growth in terms of the purpose of the proposed study.

4. The administrative leadership of the schools should be intelligent and promising from the standpoint of training, energy, capability, and general alertness to educational progress.

5. The members of the teaching staff should have reasonably good fundamental training and the capacity and the desire to attain increasingly clear approaches to their work with materials, boys and girls, and community problems.

6. If possible, schools should be selected that have already begun to make an intelligent approach to educational problems.

7. The schools selected should have physical plants and equipment reasonably adequate to their present needs, and the superintendents should be reasonably responsive to the obvious needs of the schools.

8. The schools should be so situated as to influence the development of other schools in the state.

9. The agreement to accept membership in the study should be made by the principal and the teaching staff after careful consideration of the school’s possible contribution as a member-school.

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Selection Sixteen Member-Schools

1. Drewry Practice High School of Talladega College, Alabama
2. State Teachers College Laboratory School, Montgomery, Alabama
3. Atlanta University Laboratory School, Atlanta, Georgia
4. Natchitoches Parish Training School, Natchitoches, Louisiana
5. Southern University and Agricultural and Mechanical College Demonstration School, Scotlandville, Louisiana
6. D. Webster Davis Laboratory School of Virginia State College for Negroes, Ettrick, Va.
7. Lincoln High School, Tallahassee, Florida
8. A. S. Staley High School, Americus, Georgia
9. Lincoln-Grant School, Covington, Kentucky
10. Magnolia Avenue High School, Vicksburg, Mississippi
11. Dudley High School, Greensboro, NC
12. Booker T. Washington High School, Rocky Mount, NC
14. Pearl High School, Nashville, Tennessee
15. I. M. Terrell High School, Fort Worth, Texas
16. Huntington High School, Newport News, Virginia

Purpose of the Study

1. To discover the needs of the secondary school child
2. To discover, and to take account of the educative process of the additional needs of Negro children in the social setting of American life.
3. To give each school an opportunity to study its own situation in the light of the basic purposes of education.
4. To discover what is involved in democratic living.
5. To find ways in which experiences may be shared.
6. To devise ways of providing worthwhile experiences.

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Problems to be Attacked by the Study

1. How can we know when pupils have learned?
2. How can classroom procedures be made more democratic?
3. How can the administration of the school be made more democratic?
4. How can we break down the organization of the traditional school, in which each teacher acts as a separate entity?
5. How can we formulate a philosophy for a school and make it function?
6. To what extent should the general community participate in the formation of a school program, and how can the necessary participation be gained?
7. How can the academic subjects in school be taught in terms of the community?
8. How can the traditional high school be organized to relate its program to the life of the community?
9. What criteria should be used in the selection of teachers?
10. How can the needs and interests of the pupils be met in particular subject-matter areas: (a) organization, (b) scope, (c) individual differences, (d) analyses of needs, (e) evaluation, (f) remedial instruction?
11. How can a functional health program be developed?
12. How can better ways of using community resources in the school program be found?
13. How can techniques of evaluation be improved?
14. How can teachers be brought to agree on desirable pupil behavior?
15. How can the acquisition of desirable study habits be encouraged?
16. How can provision be made for the mastery of the technical processes?
17. What criteria should be used in determining the nature and the scope of the necessary subject matter to be included in an improved program of instruction?
18. What constitutes a good learning situation?
19. How can adequate teaching materials be secured?
20. How can adequate provision be made for individual differences throughout the school program?
21. What are the sources of teaching material?
22. How can the school aid in resolving conflicts between youth and the community?

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Further Identifications of Problems

1. How can extensive use of pupils’ interests and planning abilities be made in the development of curriculum materials?
2. How can subject matter that is of value in understanding important situations that pupils are meeting or expect to meet be selected?
3. How can more adequate techniques for appraising pupil growth be developed, and how can pupil participation be used in the process?
4. How can community activities, classroom work, and extra-curriculum activities be coordinated?
5. How can more adequate instruction in reading and in written and oral expression be included as an important aspect of the curriculum?
6. How can a more flexible program of instruction, giving adequate recognition to individual differences among pupils, be developed, and how can this program be made to operate in promotion and graduation?
7. How can counseling and guidance techniques be used as means to pupil growth and as substitutes for some of the usual disciplinary techniques?
8. How can more adequate techniques for recording and reporting pupil growth be developed?
9. How can all situations in the school community and the local community be used as opportunities for developing learning situations?
10. How can vocational training and guidance be provided for through the limited resources of the school?
11. How can the critical needs of Negro children be identified and provided for?
12. How can the core programs be improved and enlarged?
13. How can an interest in, and techniques for, the co-operative formulation of purposes and plans by the entire staff be developed?
14. How can the curriculum be organized around wartime and postwar needs?


Issues for More Realistic Teaching for Sciences and Social Studies

- Does the Negro's racial inheritance incapacitate him from significant achievement in a world civilization?
- How is the effort of the Negro to achieve security in the American social order related to the efforts of other minority groups?
- What is the real health status of the Negro, and can it be improved?

Plans for the Future

1. The study has afforded workshop experience to faculty members.

2. Teacher growth has been stimulated through library facilities.

3. Consultant service and planning conferences have enabled schools to clarify their individual purposes in terms of more clearly identified needs.

4. The study has been the means of awakening teachers to the possibilities of introducing better techniques in selecting, presenting, and appraising subject matter.

5. Educational opportunities have been offered through scholarships to teachers in various universities.

6. Opportunities have been provided for growth through visits (a) of staff members to schools, (b) of faculty members to other schools, and (c) of college instructors.

7. The study has encouraged a more democratic administration of school affairs.

8. Conferences of staff members with student groups have encouraged wider pupil participation in school affairs.

9. The study is serving to broaden the educational horizon through contacts among faculty members of the various schools in the southern region.

10. The study has developed a wholesome comradeship, which has facilitated co-operative activities.

11. The study has given faculty members a deeper realization of their great responsibility as teachers of Negro boys and girls.

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**Significant Efforts of the Staff**

- Promotion of the purposes of the Study in 16 member schools.
- Promotion of the purposes of the study to varying extents in more than 100 non-member schools.
- Participation in the planning and implementation of state meetings of teachers on invitation from State Agents; teachers associations and other administrative agents in Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, Mississippi, Texas, North Carolina and Oklahoma. All of these meetings have been work and study meetings with groups of principals and teachers, and based on problems which these persons presented.
- Cooperation with the Negro College Study on purposes common to both studies.
- Cooperation with the Southern Association Study through conferences and on certain purposes common to both studies.
- Planning and conducting three summer workshops promoted by our own Study.
- Participating in the planning and operation of several other summer workshops or seminars for teachers in Southern Negro schools.
- Planning and conducting work conferences with the part-time staff of the Study.
- Planning and conducting work conferences with principals and teachers in member schools.
- Promoting among the colleges an inclination to examine and take into account the important and changing needs of in-service and pre-service teachers.
- Developing bulletins, newsletters, magazine articles, and other materials relative to the works of the Study.

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Approved High Schools

- Margaret Barber Seminary, Anniston, Alabama.
- Burrell Normal Schools, Florance, Alabama.
- Alabama State Teachers College High School Department, Montgomery.
- Alabama A. & M. College High School Department, Normal, Alabama.
- Tuskegee Institute High School Department, Tuskegee, Alabama.
- Booker T. Washington High School, Miami, Florida.
- Georgia N. & A. College High School Department, Albany, Georgia.
- Atlanta University Laboratory High School, Atlanta, Georgia.
- Paul Dunbar High School, Lexington, Kentucky.
- Tougaloo College High School Department, Tougaloo, Mississippi.
- Barber-Scotia College High School Department, Concord, North Carolina.
- Bricks Jr. College High School Department, Bricks, North Carolina.
- Hillside Park High School, Durham, North Carolina.
- Albion Academy, Franklinton, North Carolina.
- William Peen High School, High Point, North Carolina.
- Palmer Memorial Institute, Sedalia, North Carolina.
- Atkins High School, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.
- Huntington High School, Newport News, Virginia.

Appendix N: Alabama State Teachers College Buildings

(1) William Burns Paterson Hall – A two-story brick building that provides 15 classrooms, one lecture-assembly room seating 340 students, a temporary library on the “attic” floor and the various administrative offices which utilize the equivalent of seven classroom units. (Erected in 1928)

(2) John Beverly Hall – Includes a lab and health service (Erected in 1939)

(3) The College Gymnasium – Includes a large game room & showers (Completed 1939)

(4) Tullibody Hall – A two-story brick building that provides seven classrooms, library and Home Economics rooms for the Junior-Senior High School, in addition to a second-floor college auditorium with a seating capacity of 1100 persons. (Erected in 1906) [Original wood-frame Tullibody Hall, erected 1895, destroyed by fire and rebuilt]

(5) Stewart Hall – A library and office for the campus elementary school. (Remodeled in 1924 and again in 1945)

(6) The Library Graduate Classroom Building (Under construction [in 1947])

(7) Terrell Music Hall – Created for Music Appreciation and Band. (Erected in 1944)

(8) DeRamus Music Hall – For individual instruction and piano practice in addition to the choral auditorium. (Erected in 1944)

(9) Govan Hall – Includes two laboratory rooms for manual arts, graphic arts, and school art. (Erected in 1947)

(10) Holloway Hall – Created for communications and for Audio-Visual Education and which also has a basement laboratory for Ceramics and associated plastic arts. (Erected 1947)

(11) NYA Woodwork Shop which has power machinery to supplement the accommodations of the manual Arts Laboratory. (Erected in 1941-42)

(12) J. Garrick Hardy Student Center (1949)

(13) C. J. Dunn Arena – Sports Practice Facility (Erected 1952, expanded 1956)

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Appendix O: Questions for Students of Laboratory High Schools

NAME: __________________________________ E-Mail: ________________________________

Address: ______________________________ Phone: ________________________________

1. Were you a student or teacher at Lab High School?

2. Which Lab School did you attend _______________ When?
   19_______ to 19 _______

3. Did you graduate from Lab High? Yes: _____ (year graduated) No: ______ (year left)
   3a. If you did not graduate from Lab High, why did you leave the school?

4. Did you attend college? □ Yes □ No

5. Did you graduate from college? □ Yes □ No

6. What degree(s) do you hold?
   □ High School Diploma □ 2 year College Degree
   □ 4 year College Degree □ Master’s Degree
   □ Ph.D. or Ed.D. Degree □ Professional Degree [Which one?]

7. What is (or was) your profession or career choice:

8. As a student, do you believe you received a good education at your laboratory high school?
   □ Yes □ No

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12 These written questions were used as a guide. The interviews conducted were open, in that former students were invited to have free range in what they wanted to talk about. Several students offered to also provide written responses to these questions. Teachers College, Columbia University Institutional Review Board protocol number: 11-135CR.
9. If you answered Yes, which characteristics of the school do you think most contributed to Lab School being characterized as a good school. I would like for you to rank them in the order of importance, if you can. I have a list of characteristics to consider: (Please let me know if there are characteristics I missed that should be included in this context. Feel free to use a separate sheet or the back.)

Teachers _______ Community support _______
Principal _______ Building Structure _______
Student body _______ Facilities (gym, cafeteria, etc.) _______
Curriculum _______ Extracurricular Opportunities _______
Transportation _______ School Materials _______
Other _______ Other _______

10. Please explain your ranking of the top 3 characteristics that made it a good school:

11. How would you say that your laboratory school was perceived by the community?

12. If you answered No to number 9 (it was not a good school), please rank in order of importance the reasons you characterize it as not being a good school.

Teachers _______ Community support _______
Principal _______ Building Structure _______
Curriculum _______ Facilities (gym, cafeteria, etc.) _______
Transportation _______ Extra-curricular Opportunities _______
School Materials _______ Student demographics _______
Other _______ Other _______

13. Please tell me any extracurricular activities you participated in while at Lab High?

14. Would you consider the role of the Principal of the school to be important at Lab High? Why?

  □ Yes   □ No
15. Because Lab School was part of the College/University, do you recall a role the President of the college played in your education or the goings on at Lab School?

16. In what ways did the community demonstrate support of Lab High?

17. How did parents demonstrate support of and commitment to Lab High? (Attending parent-teacher conferences, attending plays, providing materials, etc.)

Did you have a parent, sibling or child attend the Laboratory School?

1. Did either of your parents attend Lab School? □ Yes □ No
   1a. Mother – graduated: 19_______ Father – graduated: 19_______
   1b. What degree(s) did he/she ultimately earn?
      □ High School Diploma   □ 2 year College Degree
      □ 4 year College Degree □ Master’s Degree
      □ PhD or EdD Degree     □ Professional Degree [Which one? _______________]

2. Did your siblings attend Lab School? □ Yes □ No
   2a. What years did he/she attend Lab School?
      (1) 19 _______ to 19 _______   (2) 19 _______ to 19 _______
   2b. What degree(s) that he/she holds
      □ High School Diploma   □ 2 year College Degree
      □ 4 year College Degree □ Master’s Degree
      □ PhD or EdD Degree     □ Professional Degree [Which one? _______________]

□ High School Diploma □ 2 year College Degree
For Former Teachers of a Laboratory High School

1. Did you Student-Teach at Lab High?

2. Were you a full time teacher?

3. What were the years that you taught at __________________________ Laboratory School?

4. What degree(s) did you hold? ________________________________________________

5. Did you belong to a professional teacher’s association? If so, which one?

6. Did you belong to any other state or national organization?
Appendix P: Chronological History of Alabama Negro Colleges

1867: American Missionary Association opened schools at Talladega and at Marion, the school at Talladega being named after General Swayne and the school at Marion being named for President Lincoln.

1868: The State Board of Education of Alabama authorized ten “normal” classes with appropriations from the “Negro Public School Fund”.

1869: WILLIAM HOOPER COUNCILL began a school at Huntsville.

1869: TALLADEGA COLLEGE was incorporated.

1870: State Board of Education reported nine “normal classes” in operation.

1871: State Board of Education's appropriations for “normal classes” included $1250 to the school at Marion and $1000 to the school at Huntsville.

1872: TALLADEGA COLLEGE began theological training.

1873: State Board of Education created the STATE NORMAL SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY at Marion on December 7 and the HUNTSVILLE STATE NORMAL SCHOOL on December 9.

1874: State Board of Education (on December 15) amended the act respecting the STATE NORMAL SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY at Marion with the inclusion of this statement...IT BEING THE INTENT AND PURPOSE OF THIS ACT TO PROVIDE FOR THE LIBERAL EDUCATION OF THE COLORED RACE IN THE SAME MANNER AS IS ALREADY PROVIDED FOR THE EDUCATION OF THE WHITE RACE IN OUR UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGES.

1874: Officials of the “Normal University” at Marion reported three teachers and 100 students and appealed for more money “to make the UNIVERSITY first class”.

1875: HUNTSVILLE NORMAL SCHOOL began operations after a delay ascribed to diversion of state funds in 1873-74 and commissioners purchased 2 ½ acres of land in Huntsville for a site for the school.

1875: State Superintendent McKleroy, in his annual report, described the STATE NORMAL SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY at Marion as “designed to become a university for the colored race in the state.”

1876: STILLMAN COLLEGE began as Tuscaloosa Institute with a training program for theological students.

1878: WILLIAM BURNS PATERSON elected as president of STATE NORMAL SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY at Marion.

1878: SELMA UNIVERSITY established by The Alabama Baptist State Convention as ALABAMA BAPTIST NORMAL AND THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL.

1879: STILLMAN COLLEGE changed its location to 1406 Greensboro Avenue


1880: State Assembly of Alabama authorized establishment of a normal school at TUSKEGEE.

1880: First class of six (including Mrs. Sarah B. Koyton of Bessemer) graduated from the STATE NORMAL SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY at Marion.

1881: SELMA UNIVERSITY incorporated under original name.

1881: TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE opened on July 4 with BOOKER T. WASHINGTON as the teacher.

1881: STILLMAN COLLEGE moved to 1008 Twenty-First Street where a building had been erected.

1882: WILLIAM BURNS PATERSON chosen as the first president of THE ALABAMA STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION.

1884: BOOKER T. WASHINGTON chosen as the second president of THE ALABAMA STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION.

1885: SELMA UNIVERSITY officially named as SELMA UNIVERSITY.

1885: HUNTSVILLE STATE COLORED NORMAL AND INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL: became the name of the present Alabama A. & M. College.

1885: President WILLIAM BURNS PATERSON, in his annual report (November 16), observed that “THE TIME IS AT HAND WHEN ONE OF THE OBJECTS OF THE SCHOOL...TO BE A STATE 'UNIVERSITY FOR COLORED STUDENTS'...WILL HAVE TO BE RECOGNIZED AND SUFFICIENT SUPPORT GIVEN TO CARRY OUT THIS OBJECT.”

1886: Educational Building and girls' dormitory erected at ALABAMA A. & M. COLLEGE.
1887: General Assembly of Alabama (February 26) authorized creation and establishment of ALABAMA COLORED PEOPLES UNIVERSITY. The MONTGOMERY ADVERTISER (July 27) observed that “The Board of Trustees of the STATE UNIVERSITY FOR COLORED PEOPLE unanimously voted to locate the institution at Montgomery; Negro citizens raised $5000 for purchase of site.

1888: Alabama Supreme Court decreed that a UNIVERSITY could not be supported from the public school fund.

1889: State Legislature created STATE NORMAL SCHOOL FOR COLORED STUDENTS.

1889: TALLADEGA COLLEGE charter enlarged and confirmed by State Legislature.

1890: TALLADEGA COLLEGE catalog first carried announcement of curriculum of collegiate grade.

1891: ALABAMA A. & M. COLLEGE designated by the State Legislature of Alabama as the land grant college to receive the allocation of Federal funds under the second Morrill Act; appropriation increased to $15,000; commissioner authorized to purchase the new site (182 acres located four miles east of Huntsville).

1891: TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE began the Annual Farmers Conference as an adult-education service to Negro farmers.

1893: TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE received charter from State of Alabama to operate as a semi-independent institution with a Board of trustees.

1893: STILLMAN COLLEGE opened an academic department as a preparatory school to the Theological Department.

1895: SELMA UNIVERSITY name changed to ALABAMA BAPTIST COLORED UNIVERSITY.

1895: BOOKER T. WASHINGTON made the memorable speech at the Atlanta Exposition.

1895: TALLADEGA COLLEGE graduated the first class with the bachelor's degree.

1895: STILLMAN COLLEGE became the official name of this institution at Tuscaloosa.

1895: OAKWOOD COLLEGE school site chosen by representatives of the General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists.

1896: TUSKEGEE designated by State Legislature as site for branch agricultural experimental state.
1896: Name of school at Normal changes to STATE A. & M. COLLEGE and authority to confer degrees.

1896: OAKWOOD INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL opened near Huntsville.

1897: GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER began service at TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE as director of the agricultural experimental project.

1898: STILLMAN COLLEGE moved to present location.

1898: WILLIAM HOOPER COUNCILL paid a glowing tribute at the University of Chicago in an address by John Temple Graves.

1899: WILLIAM BURNS PATERSON, in his annual report, deplored the too-exclusive discussion on the WHAT (industrial or “higher”) of education with oversight of the importance of the HOW or manner of education.

1900: TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE, under the stimulation of Booker T. Washington, founded the National Negro Business League.

1902: MILES COLLEGE begun as Booker City (now Docona) High School

1903: DeForest Chapel built at TALLADEGA COLLEGE.

1906: STATE NORMAL SCHOOL erected the present historic TULLIBODY HALL

1906: TUSKEGEE became official headquarters, both for Alabama and for states of lower Southeast, for agricultural extension and was first institution in the United States to cooperate officially with the United States Department of Agriculture in Farm Demonstration Work.

1907: MILES COLLEGE moved to present site and college work begun.

1908: MILES COLLEGE completed organization and was chartered by the State of Alabama with the name in honor of Bishop William N. Miles.

1908: SELMA UNIVERSITY name changed back to SELMA UNIVERSITY.

1909: WILLIAM HOOPER COUNCILL died in April and was succeeded by WALTER S. BUCHANAN as president of STATE A. & M. COLLEGE.

1912: TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE began Annual Clinic for Physicians as phase of health program associated with John A. Andrew Hospital (now having 165 beds).
1912: TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE began the Department of Records and Research under the late MONROE N. WORK to collect and disseminate data on various phases of Negro life. Then editions of the NEGRO YEARBOOK have since been published.

1915: TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE initiated NATIONAL NEGRO HEALTH WEEK.

1915: WILLIAM BURNS PATERSON died on March 19 and was succeeded by JOHN WILLIAM BEVERLY who had been the first colored teacher and thus also became the first colored president of STATE NORMAL SCHOOL.

1915: BOOKER T. WASHINGTON died on November 14 and was succeeded by ROBERT RUSSSA MOTON.

1916: STATE NORMAL SCHOOL changed from five-year normal to four-year “teacher-training high school.”

1917: OAKWOOD JUNIOR COLLEGE began two-year college curriculum.

1918: TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE began program of teacher-training in Vocational Agriculture and in Vocational Home economics under cooperative direction of the Federal Government and of the State of Alabama.

1919: STATE NORMAL SCHOOL received legislative appropriation of $20,000 to be added to General Education Board grant of $30,000 to erect dormitory and dining hall; also received appropriation of $2,000 toward cost of erecting home for the president.

1919 & 1920: State Department of Education conducted summer school on MILES COLLEGE Campus.

1920: GEORGE W. TRENHOLM transferred from position of State Supervisor of Teacher Training for Negroes to that of acting president of STATE NORMAL SCHOOL; two-year junior college curriculum begun; school reorganized on the quarter plan as a pioneering innovation.

1920: THEODORE R. PARKER succeeded WALTER S. BUCHANAN as president of A. & M. COLLEGE: name being changed to STATE AGRICULTURAL AND MECHANICAL INSTITUTE; upper two years of college work discontinued.

1921: STATE NORMAL SCHOOL introduced the pioneering innovation of a summer quarter with 60 days of work within ten calendar weeks (through classes on Saturdays) and with students classified to work sequentially and progressively toward graduation; also pioneered with the beginning of extension credit-study classes in four counties.

1922: STATE NORMAL SCHOOL graduated first class from the two-year professional junior college.
1922: STILLMAN COLLEGE became co-educational.

1923: PAYNE UNIVERSITY operated in Montgomery as BETHEL COLLEGE.

1924: STILLMAN COLLEGE began Bible Training School for Christian workers.

1925: TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE began regular college program.

1925: GEORGE W. TRENHOLM died August 3 and was succeeded by H. COUNCILL TRENHOLM as president of STATE NORMAL SCHOOL.

1927: STATE NORMAL SCHOOL began branch summer schools at Birmingham and Mobile; also received legislative appropriation of $200,000 to be added to grants of $150,000 from the General Education Board and $21,632 from the Rosenwald Fund which made possible the expansion “south of Thurman Street” at a total investment of $534,414.13.

1927: JOSEPH F. DRAKE succeeded THEODORE R. PARKER as president of STATE A. & M. INSTITUTE which also received legislative appropriation of $200,000 to add to General Education Board grant of $140,000 and Rosenwald Fund grant of $38,000 for an expansion program at a total cost of $378,000.

1927: TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE graduated its first Junior College class.

1927: STILLMAN COLLEGE began its Junior College curriculum.

1928: TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE conferred its first baccalaureate degrees.

1929: STATE NORMAL SCHOOL began upper two years of senior college with name changed to STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE.

1930: TALLADEGA COLLEGE accredited Class B by Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools.

1931: TALLADEGA COLLEGE accredited Class A by Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools.

1931: TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE accredited Class B by Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools.

1931: STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE conferred first baccalaureate degrees.

1932: STATE A. & M. INSTITUTE reorganized curriculum and was accredited Class A (two-year college) by Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools.
1933: TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE accredited Class A by Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools.


1935: FREDRICK D. PATTERSON inaugurated (October 28) as president of TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE

1935: STATE A. & M. INSTITUTE received $10,000 equipment grant from General Education Board

1936: STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE began all-year Branch Junior College at Mobile.

1936: TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE established Department of Commercial Dietetics and began publication of SERVICE.

1937: TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE established Crippled Children's Service under auspices of State departments of Health and State Board of Health and with the cooperation of The Rosenwald Fund and The Children’s Bureau of The U.S. Department of Labor.

1937: STILLMAN COLLEGE granted Class B (two-year college) accreditation by Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools.


1939: PAYNE UNIVERSITY reopened at Birmingham as Greater Payne University.

1939: STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE became Executive Headquarters for the American Teachers Association.

1940: TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE erected Extension Service building with Federal and state funds on land deeded to State of Alabama for this purpose; also began GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER FOUNDATION from life savings of Dr. Carver.

1940: STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE authorized by State Board of Education to offer fifth-year graduate work in teacher education and to confer non-professional baccalaureate degree; began graduate fifth year as summer program in summer of 1940.

1941: STATE A. & M. INSTITUTE authorized to resume upper two years and confer baccalaureate degrees in Agriculture, Home Economics and Teacher Education.

1941: STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE purchased site and building at 359 Broad Street in Mobile; also began revised Junior-College General-Education Curriculum.
1941: TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE completed and dedicated (January 15) the unit of the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis for the treatment of Negro children.

1942: OAKWOOD JUNIOR COLLEGE accredited Class B (two-year college) by Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools.


1943: STATE A. & M. INSTITUTE annual state appropriation increased to $81,000; matched grant of $3,500 from General Education Board for agricultural equipment.

1943: STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE annual state appropriation increased $131,000 (plus $29,000 from Teacher-Training Fund); correspondence study program initiated; first MASTER OF EDUCATION degrees conferred.

1943: TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE annual site appropriation increased to $110,000 with proposal for graduate work in Agriculture, Home Economics and Rural Education; Graduate work in Agriculture begun December 3; United Negro College Fund organized under stimulus of President Patterson.

1943: OAKWOOD COLLEGE became the new name of this institution.

1944: TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE began graduate work in Home Economics and in Rural Education.

1945: STATE A. & M. INSTITUTE annual state appropriation increased to $130,000 and the institution also allotted $582,000 for capital outlay under direction of State Building Commission.

1945: STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE annual appropriation increased to $171,000 (plus $29,000 from Teacher-Training Fund) and institution also allotted $559,000 for capital outlay under direction of State Building Commission.

1945: TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE annual state appropriation increased to $160,000; Veterinary Medicine School opened; first two master's degrees conferred; Department of Religious Extension, with full-time director organized.


1946: STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE accredited Class A by Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools.
1946: MILES COLLEGE accredited Class B by Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools.

1946: TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE staged demonstration of Low-Cash-Cost home construction as a means of improving rural housing.

1947: STATE A. & M. INSITITUTE annual state appropriation increased to $225,000.

1947: STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE annual state appropriation increased to $271,000 (plus $29,000 from Teacher-Training Fund)

1947: TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE annual state appropriation increased to $224,900 with authorization to begin curriculum in Engineering.

1948: STATE A. & M. INSTITUTE name changed to ALABAMA A. & M. COLLEGE.

1948: STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE name changed to ALABAMA STATE COLLEGE FOR NEGROES.

1948: TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE completed first unit of Veterinary Medicine Building.

1949: ALABAMA STATE COLLEGE published volume of ABSTRACTS OF THE FIRST ONE HUNDRED MASTERS' THESIS.