

**The North Carolina Fund:  
Taking Steps in the Right Direction**  
*(Final Draft)*

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The 1960's marked a period in Southern history in which regional educational programs lagged behind those in the rest of country—North Carolina was no exception to this trend. Approximately 41 percent of students in the state were failing to receive an eighth-grade education, a number that ranked 49<sup>th</sup> in the country, to go along with a dropout rate 19 percent above the national average.<sup>1</sup> Resulting from the enormous deficiency in education, thousands of North Carolinians lacked sufficient schooling to compete in a tight job market, thus creating a massive poor population in the state.

Whereas the national average showed one-fifth of the population lived below the poverty line, half of North Carolina's 1,091,656 families in 1964 were considered impoverished.<sup>2</sup>

With such a huge percentage of the state's population destitute, reaching out to all of the poor citizens was no simple task. Those leading the state realized that if the economy was going to improve, North Carolina needed to make a drastic effort to revitalize the education system. As explained by the governor at the time, Terry Sanford,

It is my firm belief that a nation that can afford to send ships under the polar ice, a nation that can afford to grasp for the moon and the stars themselves, and a nation that can enjoy the standard of living that we in America can enjoy today can also afford to provide the educational facilities and faculties that the children of this modern age need.<sup>3</sup>

With the Governor's attitude in mind and after receiving funding from the Ford Foundation and other charitable organizations, in July of 1963 the North Carolina Fund launched a multi-pronged initiative designed to improve the plight of the poor across the state. As described by Fund director George Esser, the North Carolina Fund embarked on a "quest for new ways to enable the poor to become productive citizens, to encourage self-reliance, and to foster institutional, political, economic, and social change designed to strengthen the functioning of democratic society."<sup>4</sup> One of the main focuses of the Fund was its attempt to reform the education system in North Carolina and provide better learning opportunities for the underprivileged.

The correlation between economic prosperity and quality of education was clear; the average North Carolinian lacked sufficient education and therefore struggled to bring in a sufficient income as a result. For that reason, it behooved state organizers to try and revamp the educational system, and it was hoped, in the process, increase economic growth. Statistics showed that North Carolina ranked toward the bottom in all categories that possessed a relationship between education and income. In 1960 the average North Carolinian attended school for 8.9 years, whereas the national average stood at 10.6 years of schooling. Of those in the country who received less than 8 years of education, approximately two-thirds earned less than \$4,000, placing them below the poverty line.<sup>5</sup> Through statistical measures, it was also proven that those counties in North Carolina with high illiteracy rates also tended to have lower average incomes.<sup>6</sup> It was clear that North Carolina's educational inefficiencies were leading to a lower standing of living in many parts of the state.

One of the main factors that contributed to the statistics above was that North Carolina's black population, which accounted for approximately one-quarter of the state's population, did not receive the same support for education from the state as the white population did. Black school facilities were typically older and more rundown, black students were forced to use outdated textbooks and materials, and black public schools did not receive as much state and local funding as those for white children. Data from 1964 show that the average white pupil was allotted \$826.24, while the average black student was provided with just \$565.55.<sup>7</sup> Without even stepping into the classroom, the average black student was already at a disadvantage when competing with his white counterpart. The leaders of the North Carolina Fund were aware of the discrepancy in treatment between white and black citizens, and they were determined to

move towards impartiality when allocating funding. While much of the state remained content with separate but equal school status amongst blacks and whites, the leaders of the Fund were less concerned with race and more concerned with helping anyone, regardless of color or creed, who was disadvantaged and deserving, under law, of a quality education.

The implementation of the Comprehensive School Improvement Project (CSIP) and the Advancement School, two specific projects that began in conjunction with the North Carolina Fund, serves as evidence that the intention of those heading the North Carolina Fund was to improve education for as many underprivileged and minority students as possible with the allotted funding. Before the North Carolina Fund began, funding was supposed to be distributed evenly between public schools, whether white or black. Due to glaring inconsistencies in this policy in which black schools were consistently slighted when it came to financial support, minority students' achievement suffered greatly.<sup>8</sup> The Fund aimed to steadily eliminate these inequalities with the hope that black and white pupils would be afforded an equal opportunity to succeed in the classroom. Through experimentation and cooperation among school districts across North Carolina, CSIP and the Advancement School strived to improve the education system and find more practical ways to meet the needs of children at all learning levels. These programs were not only effective in changing the shape of education in North Carolina, but they also helped pave the way for more extensive integration in the state during the 1970's. In spite of their proven value, shortly following the termination of the Fund in 1968, the state swiftly removed these programs and many like them from the North Carolina education system.

**Governor Sanford: The Key Ingredient for Reform**

Of the many factors that contributed to the success of the educational programs set in motion by the Fund, none was more important than Governor Terry Sanford. Known by North Carolinians as “the education governor,” Governor Stanford was, as described by George Esser, “much more liberal a governor than I guess we had had before or since.”<sup>9</sup> While much of the white electorate was content with segregated schools, Governor Sanford, by way of the Fund, began to push for school integration and increased educational opportunities for the white and black poor. In his mind, education was the key to putting an end to racism, achieving economic success, and living a quality life.<sup>10</sup> This sentiment is best explained in a 1964 speech given by the Governor to the Maryland Teacher’s Association in Baltimore when he stated, “This nation must understand that the first national purpose must be education. What else should stand ahead: Nothing. For all other purposes find their fulfillment through education.”<sup>11</sup>

With his progressive attitude and a hunger to enact change in his four years in office, Governor Sanford was determined to turn the education system in North Carolina around. Though the Governor felt strongly about the importance of integration, it was imperative that he broach the subject lightly, especially when speaking in public. As most white North Carolinians were conservatives who tended to support segregation, if Governor Sanford were to have openly stated his desire to integrate schools, several things might have happened. First, he would have quickly lost public support from his constituents and faced a harsh public outcry against him. Second, open talk of integration would have made his dealings with the North Carolina Board of Public Education much more difficult. And third, the Governor would have struggled to gain political backing from the legislature when trying to free up funding for future programs.

Many who worked for the Board, specifically Superintendent of Public Instruction, Charles Carroll, could have made the implementation of the new programs considerably more complicated if racial issues were discussed publicly.<sup>12</sup> As a conservative, Carroll was not only afraid of losing power with the advent of new school development programs, but he also could sense a push from the Governor and the North Carolina Fund towards integration. In addition, he tended to shy away from change in general. Described by Sanford's educational specialist, William Flowers, as "a politician in an educator's job," Carroll knew the enormous power he held as Superintendent and he almost stopped CSIP before it began.<sup>13</sup> As Flowers explained in his final report on CSIP, if Carroll wanted to stop one of Governor Sanford's programs from being implemented, the Superintendent simply had to "delay the request, make sure to emphasize the tax-related expenses or raise the question of whether the proposal is 'professionally sound.'"<sup>14</sup> In essence, Carroll "had the power to 'outwait' any governor with whose ideas he does not agree."<sup>15</sup> (109) Fortunately for the Fund, CSIP and the Advancement School had strong support from the Governor causing the State Board of Education and Carroll to eventually allow for the creation of these programs.

To avoid confrontation with conservative political figures like Carroll who could impede his progress in trying to move ahead with new policies, the Governor often danced around the issue of race when in the public eye. Though sometimes he showed his desire for educational integration through speeches, in an attempt to maintain public support, Governor Sanford made his aspiration for reform blatantly evident through advocacy of specific programs including: the Learning Institute of North Carolina (LINC), Youth Educational Services (Y.E.S), the Governor's School, and the School for the Arts.<sup>16</sup> In public documentation, matters are rarely discussed by Governor Sanford or

his colleagues explicitly in terms of white and black. Instead, books and journals, especially those produced by the government bodies, refer to “diversity” or helping “all people.”

To learn just how serious some were about keeping separate educational facilities, one must look no further than the story of Flowers’ career path in education. As Principal of Newburn High School in Newburn, Virginia during the 1960’s, Flowers openly supported integration. As these views conflicted with those of the Superintendent of Schools, Flower’s was fired from his position. Soon after, he was hired to work for the North Carolina Fund as one of the leaders in the Fund’s quest for integration.

Further proof that Governor Sanford and the rest of the Fund Administrators were eager to move in the direction of integration lies in a document entitled “The Governor’s Conference” which has the transcription of a meeting with John Ivey, a member of the Southern Regional Education Board, in which the two candidly discussed issues of race in education in front of an audience. One attendee who was the head of a university described his desire for equality of education when he remarked: “We would like to provide for every boy and girl in North Carolina, white, black, or red, whatever the color, an opportunity to have the kind of education for which he or she is most fit and which he or she most desires.”<sup>17</sup> But he also realized the enormous challenges that would arise with an effort towards integrated education:

One of the real difficulties in this State is that for an indeterminate number of years we shall have to keep our Negro institutions, or most of them, in order to educate the Negroes we have because if we were to break down all of the barriers overnight...we still wouldn’t be able to get the job done, because other institutions wouldn’t accept these students.<sup>18</sup>

Here it is apparent that in closed door meetings government officials and other integration advocates were much more inclined to speak freely and candidly about

issues of race. The findings from this conference indicate that school integration was a key matter on the agenda of Governor Sanford and his coworkers, whether they were willing to share that openly with the public or not.

### **The Political Climate**

During this period in American history, matters of civil rights proved to be the most pressing concern across the nation. While racial tensions prevailed in all regions, the South personified the sense of superiority that many whites had for blacks, as minorities were still considered by most in North Carolina to be second-class citizens. In a statistical survey published by the North Carolina Fund in 1968, 78 out of 100 white participants from the State felt that “before Negroes are given equal rights they must show they deserve them.”<sup>19</sup> In the same poll, 66 of the 100 white respondents agreed that whites are more easily trusted than blacks.<sup>20</sup> For the new Governor, movement towards integration would not come easily, as he “entered office during a period of spasmodic unrest, street demonstrations, sit-ins and auto traffic stopping by [people laying in the middle of the roads].”<sup>21</sup> Other complications included the violent and intimidating tactics of the Ku Klux Klan, which ignited fear in the hearts of many reformers, even causing some to reconsider participation in a push for equality amongst the races. Nevertheless, Governor Stanford would not be deterred, as he explained to his constituents that the Klan’s “running people away, burning crosses, making threats, wearing hoods,” were all “illegal practices” that would not be tolerated.<sup>22</sup>

Due to separate living and this omnipresent racial discrimination, blacks typically struggled to find work outside the realm of menial labor, and as technological advancements persisted, they were frequently displaced from their jobs as machines now were more efficient and economical at accomplishing the same work. Blacks, however, were not the only ones suffering. In fact, by the 1960s the number of poor whites far

surpassed that of poor blacks. Poverty was not just a “Negro problem,” but one that pertained to the whole of American society.

At the start of the 1960s, Governor Sanford felt that North Carolina, along with the rest of the South, was ripe for change. This altered climate that he referred to as the “new south” was one in which the moderates heavily outweighed the extremists, and most individuals were ready to begin an “orderly acceptance of the Negro into Southern economy.”<sup>23</sup> The biggest hurdle for the South was to escape the dark shadow that the fanatics in the region had cast over the whole of the Southern states portraying them as places filled with hatred and bigotry. As expressed by Governor Sanford, “The country’s present notions—drawn largely from the activities of white-supremacy extremists—are as dangerously out of touch with reality as the myths of magnolias and moonlight so long cherished by many Southerners.”<sup>24</sup> With this changed mentality existing, Governor Sanford spearheaded the North Carolina Fund, a comprehensive project that aimed to improve the plight of the poor across the state with programs that affected education, employment, housing, community planning, and manpower development.

### **CSIP: Origins and Motives**

Launched in 1964 and guided by the motto “The Means to a Beginning,” the Comprehensive School Improvement Project aimed to reform school programs to better assist poor and minority students who were achieving well below the national average. Individuals within the education system came to the realization that those in the middle and upper-classes were afforded better resources and more numerous opportunities in the classroom. As William Flowers, the Governor’s advisor on education, expressed,

White schools were staffed with white teachers. Negro schools were staffed with Negro teachers. Negro schools were less well financed than white. Per pupil investment in Negro school properties was lower than white. Teacher-pupil ratios for Negro schools were higher, and after 1954 the number of Negro supervisors was sharply reduced.<sup>25</sup>

In addition, more whites were entering post-high school training programs while more blacks were left with few educational opportunities following their completion of high school. All of these factors combined to create a steadily increasing educational gap between white and black youth.<sup>26</sup>

With over 70 percent of state revenue being funneled into education and with 41 percent of North Carolinians failing to receive education past the eighth-grade level (this ranked the state 49<sup>th</sup> out of 51, including the District of Columbia),<sup>27</sup> “the need for comprehensive, state-wide, experimentation and development grew more apparent and urgent.”<sup>28</sup> With such clear failure in education, it was evident that the state was not making the most of its resources. The typical programs were simply not enough to set education in North Carolina on the right track, as it was going to take special attention to repair the ills of the education system.

The state approached the problem with an almost utopian image, which it called the “Comprehensive School.” A “comprehensive school,” as described in a formal leaflet created by the State Department of Public Instruction, “is one which provides in one setting programs, activities, and services in such breadth and in such depth that the common and diverse needs, interests, and aspirations of the student population which it serves are effectively met.”<sup>29</sup> Though the booklet does not clearly state that black and whites students should attend school together, it hints at the notion by stating that such a school should accommodate “all youth of the community with their common traits and their innumerable differences.”<sup>30</sup> This idealistic school set out to improve every aspect of public education including, but not limited to: regulating class and school size, further

diversifying programs of study, improving technology, expanding extracurricular activities, implanting new teaching techniques, and advancing school facilities.

At the time, two of the main problems with the North Carolina public school curriculum were that it targeted those with a middle-class background (i.e. those who possessed middle-class values, attitudes, and cultural beliefs), and it also was aimed to maintain the status quo.<sup>31</sup> In other words, the education system was geared toward students who received schooling throughout their childhood and achieved at the average state levels. Those who were not provided with adequate schooling in the early years of grade school and those with learning disabilities were, consequently, left behind and, for the most part, dropped out of school all together. Of the students who entered first grade of public schools in North Carolina during 1950, only one-half graduated with the class of 1962 twelve years later.<sup>32</sup> CSIP's goal was to reach out to the poorest elementary schools and, in the process, raise the level of education for the underprivileged across the state of North Carolina. By targeting assistance to students in grades one through three and initiating a pre-school readiness program to prepare children even before they entered first grade, CSIP hoped to get students off on the right foot in their educational careers.

While a combination of politicians, consultants, and educators collaborated on the initial plan for CSIP, both the Ford Foundation, through the North Carolina Fund, and the State Board of Education, funded the program. Because state agency heads did not want to concern themselves with the sensitive issues of race and socioeconomic status, the Department of Public Instruction gave the Fund the power to conduct its own operations—as long as CSIP leaders kept themselves at a distance.<sup>33</sup> Because the CSIP administrative staff was integrated, with approximately 50 percent black leadership, and because conservatives believed integration would never succeed, the state forced the

group to open its own office separate from the state's educational headquarters in Raleigh.<sup>34</sup>

With approximately \$3,000,000 in grants, 45 percent of which came from the Fund and 55 percent which came from the state, CSIP received more funding than any other educational project launched by the North Carolina Fund.<sup>35</sup> Even so, funding was limited, and not every school in the state could receive aid. Rather, the program targeted the schools that were in dire need of assistance. In order to be eligible for the program, a school first had to apply through its school district and then was judged rigorously on specific criteria. To begin with, an applicant school had to originate from one of the target, needy communities that the Fund had elected to support. Nominees also had to possess academic records that displayed rates of “retardation and dropouts reflecting potential for improvement.”<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, as CSIP wanted to reach out to locales across the state, the selection board also considered the geographical location of the school and whether it stood in an urban or rural setting. After the schools met these basic criteria, the selection committee then examined those nominees to see if they:

- Were prepared for creative resources and planning
- Were uniquely distinctive with respects to methods, media, and experimental value
- Incorporated research procedures which were definitive and sound
- Had appropriate personnel, facilities, and resources within the unit<sup>37</sup>

In its first three years, CSIP reached approximately 25,000 children in 228 separate schools through 298 CSIP teams. The schools that received aid spanned across 111 of the 169 North Carolina School Administrative Units. During this period, “the project involved over 1,000 professional teachers, 900 were classroom teachers and 100 teaching college consultants. In addition, 228 elementary principals and 300 teacher aides worked with the project.”<sup>38</sup> Though few of the participating schools were

integrated, a number of the schools were minority schools in impoverished rural and urban areas. Moreover, the biracial administrative staff of CSIP proved to be an effective testing ground for integrated work efforts, while proving to many whites that their black counterparts were just as capable as they were when it came to implementing educational reform.

### **Changes that Took Place at CSIP Schools**

In its earliest stages, administrators realized that in order to successfully change the education system, they were going to have to strike at the heart of the matter—the teachers.<sup>39</sup> Before CSIP began, teachers were overburdened with classes that were too large and students that had greatly varying skill levels in the basics such as reading and mathematics. Under CSIP, class sizes were reduced and students were placed in classes based on their achievement levels. Moreover, teachers were finally allowed to provide input in attempts to improve ways in which their schools were run. One example of this was the rise of team teaching. In the past, instructors were given little choice in the types of classes they taught but were arbitrarily assigned to teach classes of all sizes. Teachers now were assigned to teach classes that best suited their abilities. Those that enjoyed teaching larger classes were given that opportunity, and those who excelled in a more intimate setting taught fewer students. Teachers were placed in environments where they were most likely to succeed.<sup>40</sup>

In addition, communication between teachers and neighboring schools increased dramatically. Not only did teacher meetings become commonplace, but teachers were also given time to visit other elementary schools to observe how programs functioned at other locations. Every CSIP school hired a college consultant whose role was to advise schools on new programs and proper implementation of suggested ideas. And finally, every CSIP school reaped the benefit of having a “Teacher Aide,” who was there to

reduce the burden on the head teachers. The aides were in place to deal with the daily organizational tasks in the classroom, allowing the instructors to focus more on lesson planning and teacher-student interaction. As expected, not every new method of teaching was successful or recommended for future implementation, but with the collaborative efforts of the CSIP institutions and its teachers, the participating elementary schools quickly learned from one another's successes and failures.<sup>41</sup>

CSIP also changed the way teachers interacted with their students. With the advent of the teacher aide, teachers were able to take more of an individualistic approach when dealing with their students. Instructors realized that every child possessed specific needs and that many students thrived off of more individual attention.<sup>42</sup> In the past students were taught in large groups that progressed at the same pace, regardless of whether all students were achieving at uniform levels. Schools working under the guidance of CSIP began grouping students according to ability in subjects like reading and mathematics.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, students were not pushed into higher levels until they were ready to make the jump to the next grade level.

Another important change brought about by CSIP was the emphasis on communication at all levels in the elementary school. Before public schools relied on a "vertical ladder approach with its top-to-bottom decision-making process"<sup>44</sup> which consisted of limited communication between faculty and administrators. With the advent of CSIP, participating schools sought the participation of various groups of adults in child education. These groups included: parents, teachers, school administrators, community residents, state consultants, and professors from training institutions. The aim was to get input from as many individuals as possible with the mindset that working together would produce the best results.

State administrators became more involved than ever before, frequently recommending changes in curriculum and teaching methods. Parents and community residents were counted on for a variety of tasks ranging from planning events calendars, to tutoring needy students, to working as substitute teachers. Parent-teacher conferences also became a mainstay in many schools, as they served as an effective means for “reporting pupil progress and for discovering ways of assisting each child in enjoying the learning process.”<sup>45</sup> Moreover, CSIP and state consultants frequently visited classrooms to observe the success of programs and provide teachers with insight into and suggestions on instructing pupils.<sup>46</sup> Whereas before, schools tended to separate themselves from parents and the community as a whole, those institutions, working under the framework of CSIP, utilized input from a variety of sources to promote experimentation and provide students with a support staff that was working for their best interests.

### **Opinions of CSIP and Why it Ended**

The first three years of CSIP received overwhelmingly positive reviews as 100 percent of the parents polled claimed that they were “very desirous”<sup>47</sup> for their children to receive the opportunities presented by CSIP. The superintendent of the Murphy School District explained the effect of the program on the schools under his power: “Our test records show that a smaller percentage of CSIP pupils are reading below grade level than any other grade in the school. In our program three pupils have made spectacular moves from the bottom group to become outstanding members of the top group, eight pupils have moved from the middle to the top.”<sup>48</sup> (286) Furthermore, of 715 faculty polled, all but 11 agreed that CSIP had helped to provide students with a better academic environment than they began with. Of those polled, 296 felt that CSIP had caused “major” change at their respective elementary schools while 385 concurred that students experienced “moderate” reform. The remaining 17 respondents believed that “minor”

changes occurred.<sup>49</sup> If CSIP was so successful and had effectively served as “the State’s First massive, comprehensive effort at innovation and improvement in instruction”<sup>50</sup>, why was the program terminated after only seven years of existence?

Several different factors might have led to the end of CSIP, but none stands out as justification for its discontinuation. Perhaps the main reason the program ceased was that state administrators did not believe that the benefits the students were receiving from the operation were worth the expenditures put forth on an annual basis. For one, the state did not have in place an adequate means to measure student improvement. Results from a program like CSIP would not prove tangible until several years down the line. Because advocates of CSIP could not statistically prove the effectiveness of the program, many conservatives from the State Board of Education likely preferred to spend millions of dollars on a program that was not geared toward helping the impoverished.

Another reason that the State might have chosen to put an end to CSIP was that the vast majority of those involved in deciding whether to keep the program alive were white conservative whites, opposed to supporting a program that assisted so many blacks. Many of the schools that CSIP aided were black schools and State officials feared that this program might expedite the process of integration. Furthermore, by supporting a pro-black program like CSIP, these individuals felt they could be jeopardizing their political careers if they lost the favor of the white electorate.

A final reason that CSIP might have been eliminated was that North Carolina administrators believed it was too difficult to implement a program like CSIP on a statewide level because the project reached out to so many parts of the state. With CSIP schools spanning the rural, urban, and mountainous parts of North Carolina, the project became much more difficult to manage and oversee. With this expansion and with

funding steadily decreasing, it was feared that CSIP employees would be stretched too thin as the number of participating schools increased. By 1970 CSIP had no longer a part of the North Carolina Fund, but instead had fallen under the guidance of the Division of Research and Development of the State. In eliminating the program, the State slowly and systematically tried to remove CSIP from its public schools. For example, the annual budget went from \$4 million in 1965-1966 to a miniscule \$796,529 in 1969-1970. Likely as a result of this funding matter, after the first three years, the number of schools that were selected to participate was on the decline. In 1966-1967, 228 schools took part in CSIP, and the following year just 177 obtained funding.<sup>51</sup> As funding decreased it limited the number of schools that the program could support. According to Mary Evans from the Department of Public Instruction, it was decided that CSIP should be phased out because it had “laid the base for more experimentation. It has served its purpose. The good things, the valid things, that the CSIP has found should be carried out.”<sup>52</sup>

Perhaps the most integral factor that led to the discontinuation of CSIP was that the North Carolina Fund, the body that created CSIP and set the project in motion, effectively shutdown as planned in 1968 after five years in existence. Without the supports of this non-profit group, CSIP lacked sufficient support, both monetarily and in manpower, from the Board of Public Education to continue. One of the main reasons for this was that many working for the state did not approve that so much of the funding was going to support minority schools.<sup>53</sup> Those selected by Fund director, George Esser, to work at the Fund were extraordinarily progressive at the time, and with many blacks working to head CSIP, state administrators were eager to voice their disapproval. Without the Fund leaders heading the initiative, CSIP could not maintain a cohesive backing for the program.

### **The Advancement School**

The Advancement School was a special project that began in 1964 and targeted underachievers in North Carolina with two specific goals in mind. First, the school desired to learn what was causing academically capable students, as proven by their standardized test scores, to achieve far below their abilities. Second, faculty were given the opportunity, as was the case with CSIP, to implement experimental programs so that underachievement could be reduced in public schools across the state.<sup>54</sup> Set in Winston-Salem, the Advancement school was administered by the Learning Institute of North Carolina (LINC), a private, non-profit organization intended to improve the leadership and quality of education in North Carolina. LINC relied on both public and private funding to maintain daily operations, and the North Carolina Fund was instrumental in helping the corporation receive over \$3 million in grants. With a Board of Directors that included some of the most influential leaders in the state—the Governor of North Carolina, the Presidents from the triangle colleges (Duke University, University of North Carolina, and North Carolina State University), and the Director of the North Carolina Board of Higher Instruction, among others—LINC had the political backing to make bold changes.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, LINC director Harold Howe was another individual in the mold of Terry Sanford and George Esser who was committed to overcoming the inequities in the education system. Working in close conjunction with the Fund, the two groups set out to “[conduct] experiments and [attempt] to assess their values with the purpose of seeing what new educational endeavors can do to help solve the problems of the state.”<sup>56</sup>

The Advancement School was strategically located near black communities and relatively supportive white communities in the area, so that integration would not invoke race wars amongst the ethnically divided communities. If the school had been placed in a white community, or an area where racial tensions flared, the Advancement School may

have never gotten off the ground.<sup>57</sup> Converted from a hospital building, the facility was designed to accommodate 350 eighth-grade boys and 50 “visiting teachers” (VTs) who chose to leave their homes and live at the institution for a three-month period. As many lacked the desire to leave their families behind, during the school’s three-year stint that ended in 1967, on average the Advancement School operated well under maximum capacity with 200 pupils and 25 instructors per term. Each year was divided into four sessions—three eleven-week terms during the year and one eight-week summer session. During its existence the school accommodated 2,323 boys and 252 visiting instructors.<sup>58</sup>

### **Improving the Teaching Experience**

Though the Advancement School operated in North Carolina, its founders wanted to make it clear that the school was not only aiming to combat underachievement for those in the state, but also that it wanted to help learn more about the phenomena to assist educators nationwide. It was hoped that VTs would take their new teaching methods and learning experiences back to their home schools where these innovative ideas could be spread further.<sup>59</sup> As the school was the first of its kind, the teachers and administrators learned as they went. As explained in the Final Report, “...the Advancement School’s ‘method’ involved an empirical approach which ultimately focused upon student-motivation, a flexibility of both structure and staff roles, and a climate of both freedom and unusual responsibility.”<sup>60</sup>

The Advancement School was also equipped with state-of-the-art equipment that included copying machines and overhead projectors, which allowed teachers to make better presentations to their classes. Furthermore, the Advancement School teachers were advised a couple of times a week by consultants who, similar to those in CSIP, advised them on innovative teaching techniques. Teachers who before felt constrained by rigid instructional guidelines now felt a great sense of freedom and responsibility in their work.

One VT compared her first few days at the school to “a father’s throwing his boy into a pool and saying ‘Swim!’ You learn that way, you have to. You don’t want to lose face. They want you to become involved, and it’s much easier to become involved if it’s your ball game than it would be if you had to use other people’s ideas....”<sup>61</sup> As displayed, the new teaching environment coupled with the flexibility instructors had with their students created an air of excitement in the classroom.

### **Student Selection and Diversity**

Though the student body at the Advancement School was very diverse, there was one shared denominator of the students that attended: each possessed above average ability, but achieved far below his potential. Of those eighth graders nominated to attend the school by the state, the average boy had an I.Q. of 108, achieved at a sixth-grade level, and earned a median grade D.<sup>62</sup> The school also made a conscious efforts to recruit individuals from all races and from all geographic locations in North Carolina. During its operation, the school maintained a black population that ranged between 25 and 30 percent at all times. Moreover, administrators searched for students from various socioeconomic backgrounds, as approximately one-third came from families that earned over \$8,000, one-third came from families that earned between \$4,000 and \$8000, and one-third came from homes in which annual income was less than \$4,000.<sup>63</sup>

By drawing such a wide array of students, the school was trying to determine whether racial, economic, or geographical factors played a significant role in underachievement. Were the symptoms of underachievement similar regardless of those factors listed above? If this was the case, the solution to solving the problem of underachievement would be more simplistic as like strategies could be applied to all pupils regardless of their background.

For some of the older teachers, integration of the faculty and the student body proved to be much more problematic. In general, especially for the younger teachers, the biracial aspect of the student body went practically unnoticed.<sup>64</sup> As one VT described, “It works. They just come together and wham! They’re a house; they’re a group. The racial differences don’t seem to make any difference to them. I was amazed, I was very leery. I’m a Southerner in that respect.”<sup>65</sup> For the students themselves, integration came easily. While there is no documentation which presents racial strife amongst the students, the final report on the Advancement School describes that though white students scored slightly higher on tests of ability and achievement, “Negro students seemed to have a more favorable attitude toward school and study [than white students].”<sup>66</sup> On the whole, it was observed that there were “no outstanding differences between Advancement School students of the two races.”<sup>67</sup> Black students proved that they could achieve just as highly as the white students when provided with the same opportunities to succeed.

Seeing that desegregation was a prominent issue on the national scene and realizing that the Advancement School had achieved success in this area, administrators decided to hold a remarkable Summer Institute on Desegregation for a hundred teachers and administrators in both 1965 and 1966. The goals of the Institute on Desegregation were multifaceted. Those present tried to gain an understanding of the ways in which a student’s background affects his ability to learn and be motivated. More important, the program gave attendees the chance to live, work, and learn in an integrated environment.<sup>68</sup> As discussed in the Final Report on the Advancement School, the desegregation program was helpful in that the teachers were given the chance to live with the underachieving students and interact with them in their ‘natural habitat.’<sup>69</sup> In addition, this experimental seminar acquainted more North Carolinians with the

Advancement School and its concept of reaching out and motivating those who achieve below their ability. What the Institute did not do was “solve the larger—and serious—problem of how to reach large numbers of public school teachers.”<sup>70</sup> In other words, how were the teachers and administrators from the Advancement School going to be able to disseminate their findings to the rest of the North Carolina public schools and help those institutions introduce these new styles of teaching with relative fluidity? Furthermore, just because many of the programs that were experimented with in the controlled Advancement School setting were successful did not necessarily mean they would be as effective in the typical North Carolina Public School.

Overall the North Carolina Advancement School was important for three main reasons. First, the school proved that when surrounded with a positive and energetic learning environment in which both the students and faculty are excited about learning, underachieving students can make noticeable improvements. A study undertaken by the Fund showed that the group of students partaking in the Advancement School earned a mean G.P.A. of 1.92 after they returned to their home institutions. The control group, or the students that never studied at the Advancement School, achieved a mean G.P.A. of 1.81.<sup>71</sup> Second, the school was one of the first to experiment successfully with integration amongst students and teachers. Along those lines, faculty and students of both races learned to work, live, and learn together in an intimate environment. Not only were blacks and whites forced to live together, they were required to so for eight months. It was also concluded that “overall, results on differences in personal and social adjustment tend to wash out.”<sup>72</sup> In other words, the differences in background amongst the diverse group of students carried little weight inside the classroom, as students hailing from very diverse regions learned in a similar fashion. And third, the Advancement

School was representative of the progressive mindset of the leaders of LINC and the North Carolina Fund. These two groups took a considerable risk when they set out to create an interracial school in the racially-heated South. This proves that educational reformers were committed to facilitating change on a small scale during that time with the hopes that it would lead to statewide, or even national, reform in the future.

In July of 1967, the Advancement School received a grant in the amount of \$1 million from the State Board of Education to continue the operations of the facility. The concept of the Advancement School spread quickly; and when the Final Report was written in 1967, Advancement Schools and similar educational facilities had been planned in Charlotte-Mecklenberg County, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

### **Conclusion**

According to Governor Sanford, the South's most glaring problem leading up to the Civil Rights Movement was "not the bigotry of its extremists. It is the inertia of its moderates."<sup>73</sup> With the North Carolina Fund, Governor Sanford hoped to get the people of North Carolina, the average citizen who had become complacent with his current standing in society, involved in helping the poor improve their social and economic predicament. Governor Sanford was a risk-taker, frequently putting himself in jeopardy of losing public support by making decisions that irked his wealthier white supporters, in an attempt to improve the plight of minorities and the poor, specifically in the area of education. As described by George Esser, who worked closely with him during the Fund's existence,

[Governor Sanford] was willing to take a lot of political criticism for increasing the sales tax to provide educational reform. He wanted smaller classrooms, he wanted better teaching, he wanted better facilities, and when he went to the Ford Foundation for the first time...[We] were pushing at that time for better results in the classroom through providing assistance through the teacher.<sup>74</sup>

While the changes set in motion might not have been as dramatic as the heads of the Fund had desired, they did serve their purpose. Not only did CSIP improve many schools in desperate need of aid, but it also served as a forum for experimentation in the classroom. Furthermore, it helped poor students across the board achieve at a higher level. Because of this, when integration began by state mandate in the 1970s, many black students were in a better situation to compete with their white counterparts.

One of the foremost reasons why so much change took place in the education system during this period was that a number of courageous leaders stepped forward to lead the charge towards equality. Most of these men—Terry Sanford, George Esser, William Flowers, and Harold Howe—did not stop working in the field of educational administration once the Fund ended but continued on in this arena for the rest of their careers. Harold Howe, for example, began as a high school principle in the early 1960s before his stint at LINC, and eventually went to serve as the chief federal educator during the Johnson administration, focusing his efforts on desegregation and fighting poverty.<sup>75</sup> It was leaders like this, who had devoted their entire careers to improving public education, that made the Fund’s educational endeavors successful.

The experimental projects also helped to set the tone for desegregation in the future. The Advancement School, as previously discussed, not only proved that blacks could compete with white students, but it also displayed that the two races could successfully operate a school together. William Flowers, who helped shape much of the educational reform, described the influence that working with numerous black individuals had on him when he said, “What I learned [through this period of interaction] is that some of those folk were just as bright as we are, and that’s one of the things that I felt could have been true for many more if we hadn’t had the segregated system.”<sup>76</sup>

Though the Advancement School was only one of the few integrated schools in the state, the public recognition it received opened the eyes of conservative whites to the fact that change was on the horizon. In a Gallup Poll from 1963, sixty percent of white parents in the South were opposed to integration. By 1969, only one in six resisted the possibility.<sup>77</sup> According to Governor Sanford, “This new awakening, while it [did] not mark the end of prejudice and discrimination, [did] make it possible for us to intensify our interests in other concerns.”<sup>78</sup> With a changed mentality amongst a majority of Southerners, state officials could more easily implement policy regarding education, employment, and other areas that would ultimately lead to integration.

In looking back on the two programs, it appears that neither CSIP nor the Advancement School was terminated for any valid reason. CSIP was a pioneering program in the state that the administrators, teachers, and parents directly involved in were satisfied with. Though the program lacked the manpower and funding to extend to all needy schools in the state, those that did receive aid generally gave the program excellent reviews. Likewise, for those attending and working at the Advancement School, the experience tended to be a positive one. The underachieving students were catching up with the rest of their classmates, and teachers working in Winston-Salem found a renewed passion for the classroom. It appeared that these programs would have been, and should have been, there to stay. But as the Fund began to wind down in 1968, so did the vital support these programs needed to survive.

The North Carolina Fund was not only integral in starting programs, but it was also central in empowering people, especially blacks, who were looking out for the betterment of all citizens in the State. Never before had blacks played such crucial roles in state education, holding important leadership positions that allowed them to voice their

opinions and assist some of the most disadvantaged communities across North Carolina. When the Fund died, so did the voices of these individuals. Upon taking hold of CSIP and the Advancement School, the state administrators were determined to purge these programs from the education system; and by the early 1970s that it is exactly what they did.<sup>79</sup> Without the Fund and its powerful leaders there to battle back, North Carolina's conservative leaders had little difficulty eradicating these progressive initiatives from the state payroll. While some aspects of CSIP were kept alive in public schools, and Advancement Schools spread to other parts of the country, by the mid-1970s both were nonexistent.

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<sup>1</sup> North Carolina Education Statistics. Folder 7615, Subseries 7.3, North Carolina Fund Papers, General and Literary Manuscripts, Wilson Library, University Of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>2</sup> Brooks, Michael P. 1964. *The Dimensions of Poverty on North Carolina*. The North Carolina Fund. Durham, NC. June 1964, 1.

<sup>3</sup> From Sanford's speech as transcribed in William Flowers, W.L. Flowers, "An Historical Review of the North Carolina Comprehensive School Improvement Project, 1963-1967," Folder 7634, Subseries 7.3, NCF Papers, 59. General and Literary Manuscripts, Wilson Library, University Of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>4</sup> North Carolina Fund: Historical Note. [cited 14 August, 2002. Available from ([http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/n/North\\_Carolina\\_Fund/hist.htm](http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/n/North_Carolina_Fund/hist.htm)).

<sup>5</sup> Brooks, *The Dimensions of Poverty on North Carolina*, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>7</sup> North Carolina Education Statistics. Educational Study Committee, "N.C. Public Schools Document." Folder 7615, Subseries 7.3, North Carolina Fund Papers, General and Literary Manuscripts, Wilson Library, University Of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Bob Korstad's Interview with George Esser, November 8, 2002.

<sup>10</sup> Flowers, *An Historical Review*, 57.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with George Esser, November 8, 2002.

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- <sup>13</sup> Interview with William Flowers, November 20, 2002.
- <sup>14</sup> Flowers, *An Historical Review*, 109.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid, 55.
- <sup>17</sup> "Governor's Conference with John Ivey." 1963. Transcription Produced by the State of North Carolina, 14. Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University Of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>19</sup> *How North Carolina Whites and Blacks View: Each Other, Government and Police, Housing, Poverty, Education, and Employment*. Poll Conducted by Oliver Quayle and Company for the North Carolina Fund. 1968. Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University Of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>21</sup> Flowers, *An Historical Review*, 55.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid, 60.
- <sup>23</sup> Sanford, Terry. 1964. The New South. *Look Magazine*. December 15, 2.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid, 1.
- <sup>25</sup> Flowers, *An Historical Review*, 275.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid, 275.
- <sup>27</sup> North Carolina Educational Statistics. Folder 7615, Subseries 7.3, NCF Papers.
- <sup>28</sup> CSIP: Means to a Beginning, 1. Held on reserve at Perkins Library, Duke University.
- <sup>29</sup> *The Comprehensive School*, State Department of Public Instruction. Raleigh. 1968.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>31</sup> Proposal to Improve Teaching in Primary Grades Comprehensive School Improvement Project. Folder 7625, Subseries 7.3, NCF Papers, 2. General and Literary Manuscripts, Wilson Library, University Of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid, 1.
- <sup>33</sup> Flowers, *An Historical Review*, Summary. 292.
- <sup>34</sup> Interview with George Esser, November 8, 2002.
- <sup>35</sup> North Carolina Fund: Historical Note, 3.
- <sup>36</sup> Program, Policies and Procedures. Folder 7627, Subseries 7.3, NCF Papers, 11. General and Literary Manuscripts, Wilson Library, University Of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>38</sup> Flowers, *An Historical Review*, Summary. 286.

<sup>39</sup> CSIP: Means to a Beginning, 3.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 23.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>47</sup> Flowers, *An Historical Review*, Summary. 287.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 286.

<sup>49</sup> CSIP: The Means to a Beginning, 14.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 34.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 39.

<sup>53</sup> Author's Interview with George Esser, November 8, 2002.

<sup>54</sup> *Final Report On The North Carolina Advancement School*, pg. 4. Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University Of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>55</sup> Learning Institute of North Carolina. "Amended By-Laws of the Learning Institute of North Carolina". October 29, 1968. Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University Of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>56</sup> Learning Institute of North Carolina. "Memorandum of Agreement: The Learning Institute of North Carolina and the North Carolina Fund." Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University Of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>57</sup> Author's interview with George Esser.

<sup>58</sup> *Final Report On The North Carolina Advancement School: "The Development and Evaluation of a School for High Potential Underachievers"*, Summary. Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University Of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid,9.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid,16.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid,11.

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid,12.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid,17.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid,37.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid,17.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid,19.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> A Research Report of the North Carolina Advancement School: Spring Semester 1968, Follow-up. Winston-Salem. 1969. Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University Of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>72</sup> Final Report On The North Carolina Advancement School, 37. Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University Of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<sup>73</sup> *Look*, 7.

<sup>74</sup> Robert Korstad's Interview with George Esser, October 31, 2002.

<sup>75</sup> Saxon, Wolfgang. 2002. Harold Howe II, 84, Fighter Against Segregated Schools. *The New York Times*, December 3, sec. C, p.19.

<sup>76</sup> Interview with William Flowers, November 20, 2002.

<sup>77</sup> Sanford, Terry.1971. Charting A New Approach to Save The Nation. *The Chapel Hill Weekly* May 5, sec. 2.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Interview with William Flowers.