

A CASE STUDY IN THE DESEGREGATION OF GEORGE WASHINGTON HIGH
SCHOOL AND LANGSTON HIGH SCHOOL IN DANVILLE, VIRGINIA DURING
THE 1970-1971 SCHOOL YEAR

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(Abstract)

This paper provides a historical analysis of the desegregation of George Washington High School and Langston High School in Danville, Virginia in 1970. The author focuses on the related desegregation litigation on a national, state, and local level as well as the historical context for desegregation in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

In August of 1970, Danville, Virginia embarked on a new era in education as its schools would be totally desegregated. It would no longer operate under the freedom of choice plan that had been in effect since 1965 and permitted African-American parents to send their children to the all-white schools. The school system was to be fully integrated and operating as a unitary system.

Using newspaper accounts, correspondence from key figures, and interviews with key people in Danville in 1970, the author addresses four areas of research: (a) What led to the desegregation of schools in Danville, Virginia? (b) Who were the key players in the desegregation movement? (c) How were the community, the students, and the staff prepared for desegregation? and (d) What were the attitudes and the concerns about desegregation? The data was collected and analyzed using qualitative methodology. The constant-comparative method espoused by Maykut and Morehouse was used to analyze the data and Bronfenbrenner's concept of the "nested environment" was the theoretical model used to organize the data.

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