Research Lesson Plan: Brown v Board of Education
Author(s): Anthea Bedminster, Devin M. Sawdey
Targeted Grade Level: Grade 8

Essential Question: How and why did segregated schools change over time?

Formative Assessment Prompts:

Instructional Chunk #1: What does “separate but equal” mean?

Instructional Chunk #2: What were the arguments for the desegregation of schools?

Instructional Chunk #3: How did the Delaware cases lead to the ruling in Brown v Board of Education?

Standard Addressed: History 1: Students will examine historical materials relating to a particular region, society, or theme; analyze change over time, and make logical inferences concerning cause and effect.

PPL:
- Brown stands alone as the case that led to desegregation.
- Delaware never had a problem with segregation

Activating Strategies:

Strategy 1: Show picture of Milton Colored School. What is this?

Strategy 2: Show picture of Milton Public School. What is this?

Strategy 3: Show pictures and assessments of each school and ask students to make a Venn Diagram of the information. Are these schools equal?

Teaching Strategies:
- Paired reading

Key Vocabulary to preview
- Segregation
- Desegregation
- Precedent
Graphic Organizer(s) Used:
- Venn diagram, Analytic chart

Materials Needed:
- Photographs and assessment tables for Milton Colored School and Milton Public School
- Summary of Plessy v Ferguson
- Summaries of Parker, Bulah, Belton, and Brown cases

Differentiation Strategies:
- Heterogeneous pairs

Instructional Plan:

Instructional Chunk #1: Do you think that the Milton schools were “separate but equal”?

1. Procedures: Tell students that today they will be investigating the problem of segregation in public schools. They have seen photos and read assessments of the two schools. Ask the students what they need to know in order to determine if the schools were “separate but equal”? After some discussion, provide them with the summary of the Plessy ruling. With their partner, have them read the case summary and in one sentence define “separate but equal.”

2. Debrief: ask the students… Do you think that the Milton schools were “separate but equal”?

3. Check for Understanding/Summarizing Activity: Have one partner ask the other, “Is there another way of defining separate but equal?” Open the question for discussion by the class.

Instructional Chunk #2: What were the arguments for the desegregation of schools?

1. Procedures: Tell students that much had happened between the Plessy decision and the 1950s. During World War II in the 1940s, many African-Americans had served in the Armed forces and served with distinction. Jackie Robinson had broken the color barrier in Major League baseball by starting for the Brooklyn Dodgers in April of 1947. President Truman had desegregated the Armed forces in 1948. Still segregation was a blight on America, primarily in the South, but found in other regions as well. Against this backdrop a judge in Delaware handed down three rulings that would lead to the Supreme Court ruling in Brown v Board of Education. We will look at how those rulings led to Brown.

2. Tell the students that you will provide each pair with four summaries of segregation cases and a graphic organizer to assist them in summarizing points of view.

3. Once the students have the necessary materials, read the central question in the graphic organizer, “What were the arguments for the desegregation of school?” Each pair is to read each summary and to reduce the argument to one or two sentences to be scribed in the appropriate box. As students complete the graphic organizer have each member of the pair discuss their
responses to the question. If necessary, they are to amend their answers.

4. Debrief: ask the students… What were the arguments for the desegregation of schools?

**Instructional Chunk #3:** How did the Delaware cases lead to the ruling in Brown v Board of Education?

1. **Procedures:** Now, have the students arrange the summaries of the cases in chronological order from left to right. Ask them if there is any connection between the Delaware rulings and that in Brown.

2. **Debrief:** ask the students… How did the Delaware cases lead to the ruling in Brown v Board of Education?

**Summarizing Strategy:** 3-2-1

3- What were three desegregation cases in the 1950s?
2- What were two arguments against segregation?
1- What was common to all cases?

**Assignment/Assessment:**

The segregationist idea of “separate but equal” was overturned by the Supreme Court in the Brown v Board of Education case. How and why did segregated schools change? Explain.

- Attach Handouts or “Resources” below using page breaks to separate different “Resources.” Be sure to number and label them (e.g. Resource #1: Frayer Model) and refer to these numbers and labels in the procedure section.
- Photographs and specifics of Milton Public School and Milton Colored School
- Summary of Plessy v Ferguson
- Analyzing Points of View and Perspective chart

- Lessons must be typed.

- Cite sources and do not violate copyright law.
This is a two and one half story and part basement brick building, fireproof construction in part only, wood joist roof, slag and gravel on flat section and slate on peaked section, interior finish, classrooms, plaster walls and ceilings, wood floors, trim and doors; Manuel Training room, same finish except open brick walls; Library and Cafeteria, same finish except linoleum covered floor; Auditorium and Gymnasium, open brick walls, acoustic cellutex ceiling, wood floor and base; toilets and shower rooms, Keene cement plaster walls and plaster ceiling, terrazzo floor and base; corridors, buff brick walls, plaster ceilings, linoleum covered floor; lobby, same finish except terrazzo floor and base; stairways, iron risers, bluestone treads, terrazzo landings, heat is furnished by two low pressure coal fired boilers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total cubic feet</td>
<td>760,706</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cube factor .35</td>
<td>$267,768.51</td>
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<tr>
<td>Depreciation 8%</td>
<td>$21,421.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated Value</td>
<td>$246,347.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call</td>
<td>$246,350.00</td>
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</tbody>
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Recommendation: Underwriters labelled hose should be replaced at standpipe outlets on the second floor, hose was missing at the time of our inspection of the building. Sufficient labelled by the Underwriters 2 1/2 gallon soda and acid extinguishers should be installed throughout the building.
MILTON COLORED SCHOOL

This is a one and one half story no basement frame shingle two classroom school building, peaked wood shingle roof, interior finish, wood lath and plaster walls and ceilings, wood floors, trim and doors; heat is furnished by drum stoves; electricity, desks and chairs unattached.

Total cubic feet = 35,307
Cube factor .195 = $6,884.86
Depreciation 15% = 1,032.73
Estimated Value = $5,852.13
Call = $5,850.00

Recommendation: Fire extinguisher should be recharged within last year.

One Story Frame Wood Shed, open interior finish.
14 1/4 x 8 x 8 Height
Value = 912 Cubic feet
Value = $50.00

One Outhouse
Value = $15.00
Analyzing Points of View or Perspective

Directions: read the excerpts from the four authors and answer the central question in the appropriate box.

What were the arguments for desegregation of schools?
Summary of Plessy v. Ferguson (1896)

Facts

In 1892, Plessy purchased a first class ticket on the East Louisiana Railway, from New Orleans to Covington, Louisiana. Plessy, who was of racially mixed decent (one-eight black and seven-eighths Caucasian), was a United States citizen and a resident of the state of Louisiana. When he entered the train, he took a seat in the coach where only whites were permitted to sit. He was told by the conductor to leave the coach and to find another seat on the train where non-whites were permitted to sit. Plessy did not move and was ejected with force from the train. Plessy was sent to jail for violating the Louisiana Act of 1890, which required railway companies to provide "separate but equal" accommodations for white and black races. Plessy argued that this law was unconstitutional.

Issue

Whether laws which provided for the separation of races violated the rights of blacks as guaranteed by the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

Opinion

The Supreme Court of the United States held that the Louisiana Act, which stated that "all railway companies were to provide equal but separate accommodations for white and black races" did not violate the Constitution. This law did not take away from the federal authority to regulate interstate commerce, nor did it violate the Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery. Additionally, the law did not violate the Fourteenth Amendment, which gave all blacks their constitutional rights. The Court believed that "separate but equal" was the most reasonable approach considering the social prejudices which prevailed at the time.
Educational Resources from the Delaware Historical Society

School Desegregation

In *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), the U.S. Supreme Court decided that separate accommodations for blacks and whites were legal as long as they were equal. Segregated by law and custom, Delaware had separate public schools for black and white students.

Even though *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) is hailed as ending school segregation, the way to this decision was paved by many other court cases. Three cases are significant for the desegregation of schools in Delaware: *Parker v. University of Delaware* (1950), *Bulah v. Gebhart* (1952), and *Belton v. Gebhart* (1952).

- *Parker v. University of Delaware*, 1950. Ten students from all-black Delaware State College in Dover sued for admission to all-white University of Delaware in Newark. The case was decided in favor of the Delaware State’s students on the basis that Delaware State’s facilities were unequal and inferior to those at the University of Delaware. The University of Delaware was ordered to admit all qualified students regardless of race, the first college ordered to desegregate by a court.

- *Bulah v. Gebhart*, 1952. Shirley Bulah attended an elementary school for blacks, but there was no bus transportation. However, the bus to the white school went right by the Bulah home. Mrs. Bulah asked the school board if her daughter could take that bus to the black school and was refused. This led her to sue on the basis that the black school was not equal to the white school. The decision in this case was that the black school was inferior, and the student should be able to attend the white school.

- *Belton v. Gebhart*, 1952. Ethel Belton, a teenager who lived in Claymont, attended Howard High School in Wilmington, the only high school for blacks in New Castle County. She sued to be able to attend all-white Claymont High School, which was nearer her home and a better school. The court decided that the black school was inferior and that the student should be able to attend Claymont High School.

The *Bulah* and *Belton* decisions were handled together, and both of them became part of *Brown*. They were the only cases in *Brown* in which the Supreme Court upheld the original decision.

All three of these cases were handled in Delaware’s Court of Chancery. This is a different type of court: it is an equity court in which decisions are made by a single judge on the basis of fairness. It is not a jury court.

**Facts**

This case is a consolidation of several different cases from Kansas, South Carolina, Virginia, and Delaware. Several black children (through their legal representatives, Ps) sought admission to public schools that required or permitted segregation based on race. The plaintiffs alleged that segregation was unconstitutional under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

In all but one case, a three judge federal district court cited *Plessy v. Ferguson* in denying relief under the “separate but equal” doctrine. On appeal to the Supreme Court, the plaintiffs contended that segregated schools were not and could not be made equal and that they were therefore deprived of equal protection of the laws.

**Issue**

- Is the race-based segregation of children into “separate but equal” public schools constitutional?

**Holding and Rule (Warren)**

- No. The race-based segregation of children into “separate but equal” public schools violates the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and is unconstitutional.

Segregation of children in the public schools solely on the basis of race denies to black children the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment, even though the physical facilities and other may be equal. Education in public schools is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms.

The question presented in these cases must be determined not on the basis of conditions existing when the Fourteenth Amendment was adopted, but in the light of the role of public education in American life today. The separate but equal doctrine adopted in Plessy v. Ferguson, which applied to transportation, has no place in the field of public education.

Separating black children from others solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone. The impact of segregation is greater when it has the sanction of law. A sense of inferiority affects the motivation of a child to learn. Segregation with the sanction of law tends to impede the educational and mental development of black children and deprives them of some of the benefits they would receive in an integrated school system. Whatever may have been the extent of psychological knowledge at the time of Plessy v. Ferguson, this finding is amply supported by modern authority and any language to the contrary in Plessy v. Ferguson is rejected.

**Disposition**

Judgment for the plaintiffs.
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Graphic Organizer(s) Used:
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   **Have students read the summary independently, then paraphrase with a partner.**

2. **Debrief:** ask the students… Do you think that the Milton schools were “separate but equal”? **Require students to ground their answers in the texts provided (e.g. the archive documents).**

3. **Check for Understanding/Summarizing Activity:** Have one partner ask the other, “Is there another way of defining separate but equal?” Open the question for discussion by the class.

**Instructional Chunk #2:** What were the arguments for the desegregation of schools?

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2. **Debrief:** ask the students… How did the Delaware cases lead to the ruling in Brown v Board of Education?

   1-2-3 strategy
   1 thing that changed over time
   2 reasons why
   3 cases that led to change

   3-2-1 strategy
   3 places that could no longer be segregated
   2 reasons why segregation became illegal or unconstitutional
   1 case that led to the change

**Summarizing Strategy:** 3-2-1

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2- What were two arguments against segregation?
1- What was common to all cases?

**Assignment/Assessment:**

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• Summary of Plessy v Ferguson

• Summaries of Desegregation cases

• Analyzing Points of View and Perspective chart

• Lessons must be typed.

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