



Ford Foundation records, New York City Decentralization of Schools

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English

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Summary Information

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Biographical / Historical

Beginning in 1901, New York City schools were governed broadly by the New York City Board of Education, a central institution that held all administrative and policy-making powers. By the 1960s, the centralized bureaucracy could not respond effectively to the needs of students locally in the city's 900 schools. Parents and community leaders, particularly members of racial and ethnic minority groups, demanded the New York City Board of Education respond to their children's educational needs. The conflict came to a head in 1965 when the New York City Board of Education failed to comply with Harlem parents' demands that the new school, I.S. 201, be integrated to secure access to better educational opportunities for minority students. Protests and boycotts followed with demands for more community control over the hiring of teachers and principals and curriculum standards.

Between 1966 and 1968, parents and community leaders demonstrated and organized in response to the Board of Education's inaction. The People's Board of Education was established by a group of educational activists when the actual NYC Board of Education walked out on a meeting where parents attempted to question them on the conditions in their schools. An independent school board formed in the primarily black and Puerto Rican Ocean-Hill Brownsville neighborhood in Brooklyn. Roy Innes of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) called for an independent Harlem school district. Reports

released by the New York City Board of Education only increased the calls for reform. A study found that minority students were behind students at white schools and the national average. Another report announced that over 50% of students in New York City schools were black and Puerto Rican. However, less than 10% of the teachers and less than 3% of the supervisory staff represented these groups.

During this period, Ford Foundation president McGeorge Bundy and Ford Foundation staff were engaged in discussions with community groups, the Board of Education, the United Federation of Teachers, and the mayor's office, indicating the Ford Foundation's readiness to participate in experiments related to decentralization.

In April 1967, the New York State Legislature passed a bill, later ratified by the Governor, that required Mayor Lindsay to develop a plan for decentralizing the New York City school system in exchange for greater state educational aid. Lindsay appointed a board of educational experts, headed by Ford Foundation president McGeorge Bundy, to formulate a plan. Bundy served as the chairman of the Mayor's Advisory Panel on Decentralization. The Panel also included: Mitchell Sviridoff, administrator of the Human Resources Association, Francis Keppel, president of General Learning and former US Commissioner on Education, Alfred Giardino, president of NYC Board of Education, Bennetta Washington, director of Women's Job Corps, and Antonia Pantoja, professor of sociology at Columbia University.

From May until November 1967, the Mayor's Panel reviewed proposals and staff papers, sought advice, deliberated, and drafted and redrafted their report. The staff worked in offices provided by the Foundation but were paid out \$50,000 allocated by the city to the Institute of Public Administration. The Panel met formally with a variety of interested groups, including representatives of civic associations, the United Parents Association and Public Education Association, black community leaders, the Council of Supervisory Associations, local school boards, the Board of Education, and the Board of Examiners. The panel found a lack of accountability for educational decisions and processes and the existence of numerous legislative and bureaucratic checks which slowed innovation and flexibility at all levels of the system.

Attempting to restructure the system to correct these defects, the Panel (with Giardino, President of the Board of Education dissenting) recommended a community school system along the following lines

1. 30-60 largely autonomous districts including elementary, junior, and senior high schools
2. Local school boards, the majority (6) of members elected by district assemblies who were in turn elected by individual school parent assemblies; the minority (5) selected by the Mayor from lists presented by the central education authority determined by the local board and superintendent of the operating expenses of the district within a lump sum allocated to the district on a formula basis.
3. Broad personnel powers for the district including the hiring of a superintendent on a contract basis, the granting of tenure to new staff, the abolition of the Board of Examiners and the substitution of locally designed qualifying examinations for supervisory personnel. All existing tenure rights of teachers and personnel would be preserved.
4. The replacement of the Central Board of Education by either a 3-man commission appointed by the Mayor or a lay board the majority of whose members would be nominated by the community school

districts and selected by the Mayor. The central staff would continue to provide certain city-wide services as well as additional services requested by the districts.

The Panel's report, 'Reconnection for Learning, A Community School System for New York City', also known as the Bundy Report, broke prematurely in the New York Times on November 7, 1967, and the dialogue and public criticism began.

In addition to the Foundation's direct involvement in the Mayor's Panel, the Foundation also provided experimental grants to several NYC schools. Beginning in the summer of 1967, I.S. 201 received funding from the Ford Foundation as a "demonstration school" along with other schools on the Lower East Side and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville section of Brooklyn. These schools were organized to provide full community involvement in the schools, even the power to name principals, to test this type of local control. Almost immediately, conflicts arose between these local school boards, the United Federation of Teachers, and the New York City Board of Education. The newly established local school board sent dismissal letters to 19 teachers and administrators, all but one of them white and Jewish. The teachers' union responded by going out on strike. Ultimately, a judge forced the local board to take back the teachers. The judge's decision only increased racial tensions between black and Jewish New Yorkers. The strike began with a one-day walkout in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville school district, but it escalated to a citywide strike in September of that year, shutting down the public schools for a total of 36 days. More than one million students were out of school between September and November in 1968. Critics of the strike and the decentralization initiative blamed the Ford Foundation and McGeorge Bundy. Many concerned individuals wrote to the Ford Motor Company (long separated from the Ford Foundation) and vowed never to buy a Ford product again.

In 1969, the New York State Legislature rewrote the law governing the city's schools, granting virtually total control over elementary and middle schools to local school boards. High schools remained under central control.

Decentralization of NYC Schools lasted until 2002 when control of the school system was returned to the mayor under Michael Bloomberg's administration. The community school boards were abolished and the Board of Education was renamed the Panel for Educational Policy.

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Scope and Contents

The collection includes background information on New York City schools, meeting notes, recommendations from experts in the field of education, drafts of the Mayor's Advisory Panel on Decentralization final report: Reconnection for Learning: A Community School System for New York City York City Schools, correspondence with New Yorkers angered by the New York City teachers' strike, and clippings related to school decentralization in New York City and across the country. The collection spans from 1968 to 1973.

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Arrangement

The collection is organized into three series:

Series 1: Mayor's Advisory Panel on Decentralization, 1962-1969

Subseries 1: Information Files, 1962-1969

Subseries 2: Report Drafts, 1966-1969

Series 2: Correspondence Files of William H. Nims, 1967-1968

Series 3: Clippings, 1968-1973

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Processing Information

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Immediate Source of Acquisition

This material was transferred to RAC in 2019 by the Ford Foundation and ingested by RAC as Accessions 2019:028, 2019:046, and 2019:017.

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Related Materials

Related Materials

New York State Education Dept. Center on Innovation in Education New York City School Decentralization Files, Held by the New York State Archives

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Controlled Access Headings

- Education System--New York City
- Ford Foundation
- School System--New York City
- Schools -- Decentralization -- New York (N.Y.)

Collection Inventory

Mayor's Advisory Panel on Decentralization, 1962-1969

Biographical / Historical

In April 1967, the New York State Legislature passed a bill, later ratified by the Governor, that required Mayor Lindsay to develop a plan for decentralizing the New York City school system in exchange for greater state educational aid. Lindsay appointed a board of educational experts to form the Mayor's Advisory Panel on Decentralization.

McGeorge Bundy, president of the Ford Foundation, served as the chairman of the Panel. The Panel also included: Mitchell Sviridoff, administrator of the Human Resources Association, Francis Keppel, president of General Learning and former US Commissioner on Education, Alfred Giardino, president of NYC Board of Education, Bennetta Washington, director of Women's Job Corps, and Antonia Pantoja, professor of sociology at Columbia University.

From May until November 1967, the Mayor's Panel reviewed proposals and staff papers, sought advice, deliberated, and drafted and redrafted their report. The staff worked in offices provided by the Foundation but were paid out \$50,000 allocated by the city to the Institute of Public Administration. The Panel met formally with a variety of interested groups including representatives of civic associations, the United Parents Association and Public Education Association, black community leaders, the Council of Supervisory Associations, local school boards, the Board of Education, and the Board of Examiners. The panel found a lack of accountability for educational decisions and processes and the existence of numerous legislative and bureaucratic checks which slowed innovation and flexibility at all levels of the system.

Attempting to restructure the system to correct these defects, the Panel (with Giardino, President of the Board of Education dissenting) recommended a community school system along the following lines

1. 30-60 largely autonomous districts including elementary, junior, and senior high schools
2. Local school boards, the majority (6) of members elected by district assemblies who were in turn elected by individual school parent assemblies; the minority (5) selected by the Mayor from lists presented by the central education authority determined by the local board and superintendent of the operating expenses of the district within a lump sum allocated to the district on a formula basis.
3. Broad personnel powers for the district including the hiring of a superintendent on a contract basis, the granting of tenure to new staff, the abolition of the Board of Examiners and the substitution of locally designed qualifying examinations for supervisory personnel. All existing tenure rights of teachers and personnel would be preserved.
4. The replacement of the Central Board of Education by either a 3-man commission appointed by the Mayor or a lay board the majority of whose members would be nominated by the community school districts and selected by the Mayor. The central staff would continue to provide certain city-wide services as well as additional services requested by the districts.

The Panel's report, 'Reconnection for Learning, A Community School System for New York City', also known as the Bundy Report, broke prematurely in the New York Times on November 7, 1967, and the dialogue and public clamor began.

Information Files, 1962-1969

Scope and Contents

This subseries contains background information on NYC schools, notes from Panel meetings, notes from meetings with community and union leaders, recommendations from experts in the field of education, including Martin Mayer and Dr. Marilyn Gittell, comments from the public, recommendations from legal experts, and other

pamphlets, memos, and reports used to draft the Panel's final report: Reconnection for Learning: A Community School System for New York City York City Schools.

| Title/Description | Instances | |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| Board of Education of the City of New York, 1965-1967 | box 1 | folder 1 |
| Scope and Contents | | |
| Press releases, copies of background correspondence found in Bundy's files labelled "Mario Fantini", and reports | | |
| District Lines, 1967 | box 1 | folder 2 |
| Martin Mayer - Correspondence, 1967 | box 1 | folder 3 |
| Gittell, Dr. Marilyn, 1964-1967 | box 1 | folder 4 |
| American Federation of Teachers, 1967 | box 1 | folder 5 |
| Districts, Local Boundaries, 1967 | box 1 | folder 6 |
| Board of Education of the City of New York, 1966-1967 | box 1 | folder 7 |
| High Schools, undated | box 1 | folder 8 |
| Board of Education, March 7th Hearing - Statements, 1967 | box 1 | folder 9 |
| Miscellaneous - Rough Drafts, undated | box 1 | folder 10 |
| Economic Development Council of New York City, 1965-1966 | box 1 | folder 11 |
| Ethnic Breakdown of Manhattan School Districts, 1966 | box 1 | folder 12 |
| Expense Budget, 1966-1967 | box 1 | folder 13 |
| Functions and Decisions - Draft, 1967 June | box 1 | folder 14 |
| District 4 - Manhattan, 1966 | box 1 | folder 15 |
| Panel Meetings, 1967 | box 1 | folder 16 |
| Parents Council District 2, 1966 | box 1 | folder 17 |
| Passow, A. Harry - Summary of Findings and Recommendations of A Study of the Washington, D.C. Schools, 1967 September | box 1 | folder 18 |
| History, NYC Schools, 1967 June | box 1 | folder 19 |
| New York State Office of Economic Opportunity, 1967 | box 1 | folder 20 |
| A Summary Report on An Analysis of New York State School Aid Correction, Prepared for the University of the State of New York, The State Education Department, 1966 December | box 2 | folder 21 |
| Citizens Committee for Elected School Boards, 1967-1968 | box 2 | folder 22 |
| Comments, Out of Town, 1967 | box 2 | folder 23 |
| Citizens Committee for the Public School, Inc., 1962-1967 | box 2 | folder 24 |
| City Agencies, Description of, undated | | |

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| | box 2 | folder 25 |
| Council of Supervisory Associations, 1966 October-1967 November | box 2 | folder 26 |
| Correspondence - Letters Mailed, 1967 May | box 2 | folder 27 |
| Correspondence - Lists Received, 1967 May-July | box 2 | folder 28 |
| New York City Council Against Poverty, 1967 | box 2 | folder 29 |
| Draft Plan, 1967 September | box 2 | folder 30 |
| EQUAL - Statement to Board of Estimate at Expense Budget Hearing, 1967 | box 2 | folder 31 |
| District 13 - Brooklyn, 1967 May 2 | box 2 | folder 32 |
| Institute for Educational Development, 1967 | box 2 | folder 33 |
| Intermediate School 201, 1966 | box 2 | folder 34 |
| Intermediate School 201, 1966-1967 | box 2 | folder 35 |
| Joint Committee for Academic Excellence Now, 1967 | box 2 | folder 36 |
| Kalodner, Prof. Howard, 1967 | box 2 | folder 37 |
| Memos, 1967-1968 | box 2 | folder 38 |
| MARC - Metropolitan Applied Research Center, Inc., 1967 | box 2 | folder 39 |
| Massive Economic Neighborhood Development (MEND), 1966 December | box 3 | folder 40 |
| New York State Department of Education, 1966-1967 | box 3 | folder 41 |
| New York City, People's Board of Education, 1967-1968 | box 3 | folder 42 |
| New York City Budget Director, 1967 | box 3 | folder 43 |
| New York City Administration - Proposals for Reform in Ghetto Schools, 1966 | box 3 | folder 44 |
| National Education Association, 1966-1967 | box 3 | folder 45 |
| More Effective Schools Program, 1967 | box 3 | folder 46 |
| Miscellaneous Files, 1967 | box 3 | folder 47 |

Scope and Contents

Primarily correspondence and memos

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|---|-------|-----------|
| American Association of School Administration - Pamphlets, 1963 | box 3 | folder 48 |
|---|-------|-----------|

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Roles, Responsibilities, Relationships of the School Board, Superintendent, and Staff

The Right Principal for the Right School

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| Board of Examiners, 1966-1967 | box 3 | folder 49 |
| Brownsville - Ocean Hill, 1966-1967 | box 3 | folder 50 |
| Budget, 1967 | box 3 | folder 51 |
| Citizens Budget Commission, 1967 | box 3 | folder 52 |
| Comments on Decentralization, 1967 | box 3 | folder 53-54 |
| Public School 163, 1967 | box 3 | folder 55 |
| Public School 192, 1967 | box 3 | folder 56 |

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Clipping - When Parents are Respected: How a Harlem
School Inspired Pupils to Learn

| | | |
|---|-------|--------------|
| Mayor's Advisory Panel on School Decentralization - Panel Log, 1967 May-November | box 3 | folder 57 |
| Miscellaneous Files, 1967 | box 3 | folder 58 |
| Community-Wide Panel, 1966-1967 | box 4 | folder 59 |
| Distribution, 1967 | box 4 | folder 60 |
| Reports, Correspondence, and Meeting Materials, 1967 | box 4 | folder 61 |
| Institute for Educational Development, 1967 | box 4 | folder 62 |
| Legal, 1967 | box 4 | folder 63 |
| Local School Boards, 1967 | box 4 | folder 64 |
| Minimum Standards, Regulations, Etc., 1964-1967 | box 4 | folder 65 |
| United Parents Association, 1957-1967 | box 4 | folder 66-67 |
| High Schools, 1967 | box 4 | folder 68 |
| Correspondence, 1967-1968 | box 4 | folder 69 |
| P. P. & P. Others, 1967 | box 4 | folder 70 |
| Correspondence, Memos, and Articles, 1967 | box 4 | folder 71 |
| Crisis, 1966-1967 | box 5 | folder 72 |
| Two Bridges Neighborhood Council, Inc., 1967 | box 5 | folder 73 |
| Demonstration Projects, 1966-1967 | box 5 | folder 74 |
| More Effective Schools Program, 1964-1967 | box 5 | folder 75 |
| P. P. & P. Background, 1966-1967 | box 5 | folder 76-77 |
| Robbins, I. D., 1967 | box 5 | folder 78 |

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|---|-------|--------------|
| Tarulli, Joseph G. - Decentralization of Large School Districts, 1967 | box 5 | folder 79 |
| Task Force, 1966-1967 | box 5 | folder 80 |
| Thabit, Walter - A Report on School Districting to the Task Force on Decentralization, undated | box 5 | folder 81 |
| Translation - Panel Consejero Del Alcalde Sobre la Decentralizacion de las Escuelas de la Ciudad de Nueva York, undated | box 5 | folder 82 |
| Wilcox, Prof. Preston R., undated | box 5 | folder 83 |
| Willing, Corinne, 1967 | box 5 | folder 84 |
| West Side Committee for Decentralization, 1967 | box 5 | folder 85 |
| United Federation of Teachers, 1967 | box 5 | folder 86 |
| Publicity - Press Releases and Clippings, 1967-1968 | box 5 | folder 87-88 |

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Press regarding the Bundy Panel and Report

| | | |
|---|-------|--------------|
| Personnel Policy, 1967 | box 6 | folder 89-90 |
| Pratt Area Community Council - Brooklyn, NY, undated | box 6 | folder 91 |
| Proposals for Decentralization, 1966-1967 | box 6 | folder 92-93 |
| Public School 36-125, 1967 | box 6 | folder 94 |
| Public Meetings, 1967 August-September | box 6 | folder 95 |
| Public Education Association, 1966-1967 | box 6 | folder 96 |
| Special Decentralization File, 1968-1969 | box 6 | folder 97 |
| Towards a Final Report, 1967 | box 7 | folder 98 |
| Panel's Public Meetings, 1967 | box 7 | folder 99 |
| Public Education Association (PEA), 1967 | box 7 | folder 100 |
| Board of Education - Decentralization, 1967-1968 | box 7 | folder 101 |
| Personnel Problems and Role of Teachers, 1967 | box 7 | folder 102 |
| Research and Ethnic Composition of Staff, 1966-1967 | box 7 | folder 103 |
| Demonstration Projects, 1968-1969 | box 7 | folder 104 |
| | box 8 | folder 105 |
| Decentralization, 1968-1969 | box 8 | folder 106 |
| Feasibility of Devising New School Districts, Summary Report, Mayor's Advisory Panel on Decentralization of the New York City Schools, 1967 September 8 | box 8 | folder 107 |

| | | |
|--|-------|----------------|
| A Report of Recommendations on the Recruitment, Selection, Appointment, and Promotion of Teachers in the New York City Public Schools, 1966 | box 8 | folder 108 |
| Decentralization, Board of Education, 1964-1969 | box 8 | folder 109-111 |
| Reports by Daniel E. Griffiths et al. (1966), Board of Education (1962), and Walter Thabit (1967), 1962-1967 | box 8 | folder 112 |
| Summary Information and Report on Crisis Data, 1967 | box 8 | folder 113 |
| Draft, SUNY Report on Studies and Proposals Relative to Decentralization of Administration in the New York City Public School System, 1967 March | box 8 | folder 114 |
| Decentralization - Lawsuit, 1968 | box 9 | folder 115 |
| P. P. & P. Establishment and Organization, 1967 | box 9 | folder 116-119 |
| Panel Mailings, 1967 | box 9 | folder 120 |
| Panel Meeting - Miscellaneous, 1967 | box 9 | folder 121 |
| Panel Meeting, 1967 August 3 | box 9 | folder 122 |
| Panel Meeting, 1967 August 24 | box 9 | folder 123 |
| Panel Meeting, 1967 September 8 | box 9 | folder 124 |

Report Drafts, 1966-1969

Scope and Contents

Contains copies of preliminary and final drafts of the Bundy Report (Reconnection for Learning, A Community School System for New York City) with margin notes by Richard Magat, Lee Seldes, Dr. Marilyn Gittell, and Francis Keppel

| Title/Description | Instances | |
|------------------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Drafts, 1966-1969 | box 10 | folder 125-131 |
| | box 11 | folder 132-138 |
| | box 12 | folder 139-148 |
| | box 13 | folder 149-155 |
| | box 14 | folder 156-161 |
| | box 15 | folder 162-164 |
| Preliminary Draft, 1967 October 11 | box 15 | folder 165 |

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|--|--------|-------------------|
| Preliminary Draft with Edits - Combining Power for Learning (Working Title): Report of the Mayor's Advisory Panel on Decentralization of the New York City Schools, 1967 October 11 | box 15 | folder 166 |
| Final Report Drafts, 1967 October-November | box 16 | folder 168-172 |
| | box 17 | folder 173 |
| Revising School Districts to Correspond to Community Boundaries: A Feasibility Study, CONSAD Research Corporation, 1967 October 4 | box 17 | folder 174 |

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Correspondence Files of William H. Nims, 1967-1968

Scope and Contents

This series contains correspondence addressed to the Ford Foundation, Henry Ford II, the Ford Motor Company, and individual Ford car dealerships that were forwarded to William H. Nims, Assistant Secretary at the Ford Foundation. Most letter writers blamed the Ford Foundation for the 1968 New York City teacher's strike. Nims' responses are also included.

Some letter writers expressed displeasure in the Ford Foundation's liberal causes in general and many vowed that they would never buy a Ford automobile again. In his responses, Nims explained the Ford Foundation's exact involvement in the schools. He also clarified that the Ford Motor Company and Ford Foundation were no longer associated.

Biographical / Historical

Thousands of New York City teachers went on strike in 1968 when the newly-formed Ocean Hill-Brownsville school board transferred a set of primarily white and Jewish teachers and administrators.

The United Federation of Teachers (UFT), led by Albert Shanker, demanded the teachers' reinstatement and accused the community-controlled school board of anti-Semitism. At the start of the school year in 1968, the UFT held a strike that shut down New York City's public schools for nearly two months.

| Title/Description | Instances | |
|--|-----------|-------------------|
| William H. Nims - Samples, Mimeographed Letters Addressed to Semon E. Knudsen, 1968 October 23-28 | box 17 | folder 175 |
| No Name/No Address - Ford Motor Company/W. H. Nims, 1968 | box 17 | folder 176 |
| A-F, 1967-1968 | box 17 | folder 177-182 |
| G-R, 1967-1968 | box 18 | folder 183-194 |
| S-Z, 1967-1968 | | |

box 19 folder
195-201

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Clippings, 1968-1973

Scope and Contents

This series contains newspaper clippings related to school decentralization in New York City, including conflicts over Intermediate School 201 in East Harlem (many clippings related to the controversial Malcolm X memorial speech delivered at the school by Herman B. Ferguson, profiles of David Spencer, chairman of the I.S. 201 governing board, and profiles of Rhody McCoy, Ocean Hill-Brownsville unit administrator), the Mayor's Advisory Panel on Decentralization plan, the Board of Education's counterplan for decentralization, passage of the decentralization bill, decentralization of other schools across the country, and the state of education in New York City.

A note found in the original box indicates that the clippings were sent to Richard Magat by Charles Wilson, the I.S. 201 unit administrator.

| Title/Description | Instances | |
|---|-----------|----------------|
| Clippings - Decentralization, I.S. 201 and David Spencer, 1968-1971 | box 19 | folder 202-203 |

Scope and Contents

In addition to clippings, includes a 'Brief Summary of the I.S. 201 Story,' I.S. 201 School Demonstration Project: A Proposal Submitted to the New York City Board of Education for a Decentralized School District in 1968, and Community Control vs. Decentralization, C. E. Wilson - Brief Talk by Unit Administrator of I.S. 201 Complex -- To Commission of Human Rights sponsored meeting June 28, 1968

| | | |
|--|--------|----------------|
| Clippings - Passage of Decentralization Bill, 1969 | box 19 | folder 204 |
| Clippings, 1969-1972 | box 20 | folder 205-207 |
| Clippings - Ocean Hill-Brownsville School Board, 1969-1973 | box 20 | folder 208 |

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