



Ford Foundation records, New York City Decentralization of Schools

This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on October 22, 2020.

English

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Table of Contents

Summary Information	3
Biographical / Historical	3
Scope and Contents	5
Arrangement	6
Administrative Information	6
Related Materials	7
Controlled Access Headings	7
Collection Inventory	7
Mayor's Advisory Panel on Decentralization	7
Information Files	8
Report Drafts	13
Correspondence Files of William H. Nims	14
Clippings	14

Summary Information

Repository:	Rockefeller Archive Center
Creator:	Ford Foundation
Title:	Ford Foundation records, New York City Decentralization of Schools
ID:	FA1524
Date [inclusive]:	1962-1973
Physical Description:	9.3 Cubic Feet 20 boxes (19 legal document containers and 1 letter document container)
Language of the Material:	English .

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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 New York City Mayor John 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.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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 1962 to 1973.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Processing Information

Standard processing by Katie Martin, June 2019

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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.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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 New York City Mayor John 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	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

American Association of School Administration - Pamphlets, 1963	box 3	folder 48
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Scope and Contents

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

The Right Principal for the Right School

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

Scope and Contents

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
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
Scope and Contents		
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
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

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

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		
<p>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</p>		
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

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)