

Busing perpetuates segregation in 2 South Baltimore schools

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Black and white children in two isolated South Baltimore communities are being "bused" to school each day to achieve racial segregation.

White children are being transported past an all-black school to a predominantly white elementary school that is farther from their homes.

A group of black children, in turn, bypasses by just a few blocks the predominantly white school to attend the all-black school. The white school is closer to the black neighborhood.

About 113 children

The busing involves about 113 children in the neighborhoods of Wagners Point and Hawkins Point, both industrial enclaves near Curtis Creek in South Baltimore, a study by *The Sun* shows.

No other reason for the busing except "tradition" was given in interviews with the principals of the two schools.

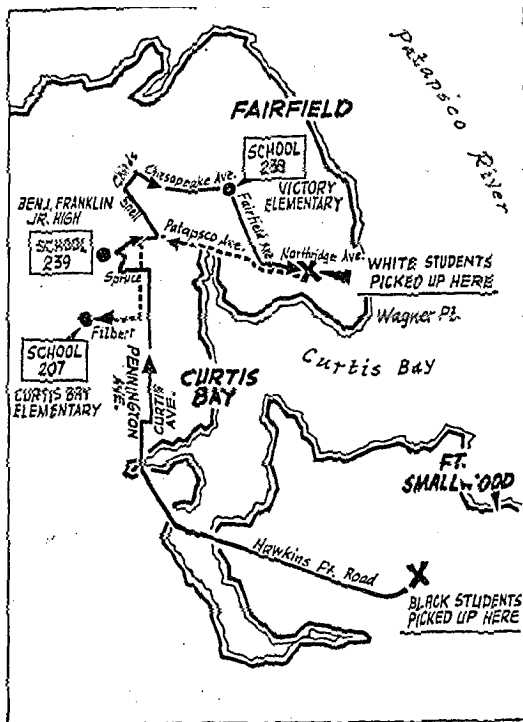
School buses in the Wagners Point and Hawkins Point areas were followed yesterday by *Sun* reporters. The following pattern was found:

1. About 13 black children were picked up in Hawkins Point and driven past predominantly white Curtis Bay Elementary School, at 4381 West Bay avenue, to all-black Victory Elementary School in Fairfield.

Only junior high

Victory Elementary, which has 415 black students, is about 4.4 miles from the Hawkins Point bus stop. Curtis Bay Elementary has 43 black students and 336 whites. It is 2.3 miles from the Hawkins Point stop.

The same bus also carried black and white children from the Wagners Point area to the



The solid line shows route of bus that takes black students past predominantly white School 207, to all-black School 238. The same bus then picks up white students, takes them past the black school to Curtis Bay Elementary.

only junior high school in the area, Benjamin Franklin Junior High School at 1201 Cambria street.

2. The same school bus, after dropping off black children at the school in Fairfield, went to Wagners Point, a mostly white community separated from black Fairfield by a field of oil-storage tanks.

At Wagner's Point, the bus picked up about 40 white children, then drove within sight of Victory Elementary School in Fairfield to Curtis Bay Elementary School.

An extra mile

That school is about 2 miles from the Wagner's Point bus stop. Victory is about a mile away.

A second busload of white children—about 40 or 50—also went from Wagners Point past Victory, to the Curtis Bay school.

The busing of the white children to Curtis Bay cannot be explained by overcrowding at Victory Elementary School. In fact, the school is under its capacity, according to Mrs. Mary Veloso, the principal. Curtis Bay Elementary School has always been filled beyond its capacity, its principal, Katherine A. Buckley, said.

While the average class size is about 30 at Victory, it is from 36 to 38 at Curtis Bay, Miss Buckley said.

Confirmed Pattern

A spokesman for the school administration said Baltimore does not, as a policy, practice racial segregation.

He confirmed the busing pattern, however, and said that it has "generally been the tradition that children from certain areas go to certain schools."

The principal of the Curtis



SUNDAY photo—Walter M. McCordell
Wagners Point children on their way to school

Bay Elementary, he said, has never received a request from black children at Hawkins Point or their parents to attend the predominantly white school. He said efforts have been made—in the form of a community workshop last June—to inform those children that they could attend Curtis Bay Elementary.

New Policy Revealed

In response to Sun inquiries, Rebecca Carroll, acting assistant superintendent for elementary education, announced that beginning next year, parents will be required to register children at a neighborhood elementary school.

Requests for transfers, she said, will be honored as long as there is available space at the school requested.

Dr. Carroll said she believed the South Baltimore busing pat-

tern is an exception to general school practice.

The practice appears to have been going on for years, to the point where Mrs. Veloso called it a "tradition" that grew from the now-outlawed dual school system.

Driving 11 years

One of the bus drivers, Virgil Fike, said he had been driving white children from Wagners Point past the black school for 11 years and "they were doing it before I came here."

"Oh, Victory School," said Mrs. Louise Regiec as she helped her white child onto the bus at Wagner's Point, "my kids went there years ago, but when all the colored came there they took them out."

"We don't like it at Victory," said Ricky Ferris, 9, of Wagners Point. "That's where the blacks jump us."

"The children that come from

Hawkins Point have always come here," said Mrs. Veloso, principal of Victory Elementary. "They've never requested any change. It's a situation that grew up with tradition, and parents are apt to continue in the same manner."

Mrs. Veloso said that the black children from Hawkins Point all come from about four families whose children have always attended Victory Elementary School.

Title I aid

Asked if there could be any reason—besides racial considerations—for the busing of white Wagners Point children to Curtis Bay, Mrs. Veloso responded: "That's all. I think it's parental opposition."

Dr. Roland N. Patterson, the city school superintendent, was recently made aware of the South Baltimore busing by the director of the Community Re-

lations Commission.

David L. Glenn, the director, said he had "every reason to believe that Dr. Patterson will correct any law violation."

The practice, Mr. Glenn said, "would seem to be" a violation of a number of court decisions on desegregation.

Grade-level ahead

Victory Elementary School is a beneficiary of "Title I" funds for schools in poor areas under the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act. It also operates a widely praised Model Early Childhood Learning Program, in which concentrated teaching attention is devoted to nursery school- and kindergarten-age children.

Curtis Bay Elementary has "nothing extra" said Miss Buckley, the principal.

Despite this, students at Curtis Bay have consistently scored higher on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills.

Tests in 1971 showed Curtis Bay students in the elementary grades to be nearly a full grade-level ahead of their peers at Victory Elementary School. Jack Bocher, head of the city school system's transportation department, said about 3,500 of the 64,200 Baltimore students who take the bus to school are transported to relieve crowding or to eliminate "part-timeness" in elementary school classrooms.

The vast majority, some 57,000, takes Mass Transit Administration buses, Mr. Bocher said.

Deny racial busing

He said he did not know "what the reasoning is" behind the Victory-Curtis Bay arrangement and referred a caller to school headquarters.

School officials denied that there is any busing in the city for racial reasons.

They explained that the "open admissions," or "freedom-of-choice" plan at the secondary level in effect extends to elementary schools.

Elementary students who want to transfer from their neighborhood school can do so, they said, so long as they register first with their home school, there is room for them in the chosen school and the size of the class they would attend

does not exceed the citywide average for their grade.

Mrs. Veloso said no Wagners Point students had registered first at Victory Elementary "I've never seen them," she said, "and I could use them."

State reimbursement

The state reimburses the city for transportation provided for all students whose walking distance to school is more than a mile.

Morris W. Rannels, who heads the state Education Department's safety and transportation section, said he had "raised a great many questions about Baltimore's freedom-of-choice plan, but I've always been given assurances that it complied with HEW [Department of Health, Education and Welfare] regulations."

Mr. Rannels said Baltimore city is the only school district in the state with no specific attendance areas.