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Deborah Lynn Morowski

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**Prevailing Over Prejudice: A Story of Race, Inequity, and Education in  
Gonzales, Texas**

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**Prevailing Over Prejudice: A Story of Race, Inequity, and Education in  
Gonzales, Texas**

**by**

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**Dissertation**

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## **Dedication**

To my husband Pete, without whose love and support this effort would not have been possible. To my sons Peter and Mike whose patience and encouragement were invaluable.

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# **Prevailing Over Prejudice: A Story of Race, Inequity, and Education in Gonzales, Texas**

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This dissertation traces the history of Edwards High School in Gonzales, Texas, from its origins in the late 1800s through its closure in 1965 and situates Edwards within the larger framework of secondary schooling for African-Americans in Texas. Although more than two hundred high schools for African-Americans existed in Texas for some period by 1947, little is known about these institutions, especially those located in small towns.

Schooling for African-Americans following the Civil War was irregular and normally consisted only of elementary grades. As more schools became available, black students received an inequitable share of resources for their education and they did not share in the groundswell of high schools available to white students. Many of the high schools that became available to African-Americans during the first part of the twentieth century were located in urban areas. Little is known of the secondary institutions for African-Americans in the small towns of Texas. This study serves to recount the story of one such school.

The study pays particular attention to the students, teachers, and curriculum of Edwards High School, focusing on the years between 1935 and 1965, the year the school closed due to desegregation. Archival materials provided information on student demographics, enrollment and attendance patterns, as well as student participation in activities. Oral history interviews offered a glimpse into the lived experience of those who attended Edwards High. Teachers' certification records and salary data informed an understanding of Edwards High School's faculty. The study sheds light on the relationship between teachers and students and between faculty and the larger African-American community in Gonzales.

The curriculum of Edwards High changed over time. Changing state classification and accreditation standards provided the impetus for these changes. This examination of Edwards High School informs a greater understanding of secondary education for African-Americans in Texas.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Edwards School provided an education for the African-American children of Gonzales, Texas, and surrounding areas from the late 1800s until it closed in 1965 as part of the desegregation of the Gonzales Independent School District. As part of the recovery of Texas' organized education of blacks, this research focuses on one high school. It highlights the students, teachers and administrators, and the curriculum. Further, it examines the changes which occurred to the Edwards School over time and situates it within the larger context of African-American secondary education in Texas.

This introduction offers a guide to the reading of this dissertation. It notes the methodological and theoretical frameworks which guided the research. It further describes difficulties of conducting cross-racial research and comments about some of the terminology utilized throughout the project. A brief review of literature provides context for the study. Primary sources constituted a major portion of the reconstruction of the history of Edwards High School and descriptions of the available sources are provided.

### **Purpose, Methodology, and Perspective**

Little research exists concerning African-American high schools in Texas. To understand the history of schooling in Texas requires more than just knowing about schools for whites; it requires knowing the history of all those who were educated in the state. This study is an outgrowth of ongoing research regarding secondary schooling for African-Americans in Texas prior to the *Brown v Board of Education of Topeka* decision in 1954. Although previous research uncovered some general information about high schools for black students in Texas cities and towns and a few county training schools, scant data in school districts appears to be available regarding most of the high schools

for blacks in the state. The purpose of this study was to recover an understanding of a school for African-Americans in a central Texas small town. Most black high schools, more than 200 by 1940, are absent from our written history (Morowski and Davis, Jr. 2006, 47-61). To develop a carefully researched history about the Edwards School in Gonzales, Texas, the study utilized an historical case study method of research. Historical research considers the origin of ideas and practices, “the ways in which they were regarded, the alternative forms and principles with which they were contrasted and the reasons for their resilience and ultimate decline” (McCulloch and Richardson 2000, 6). Case study research is holistic and utilizes interviews, observations, and document analysis as data collection techniques (Merriam 2001). Combining these two conceptual approaches provided a framework to examine the Edwards School over time utilizing a variety of resources. However, one difficulty in conducting this type of research is the availability or existing resources. As many individuals during the 1800s and early 1900s did not see the need to preserve accurately the data from schools for blacks, much information has been lost.

Interpretive and critical qualitative analyses provided a theoretical foundation for the investigation. An interpretive qualitative research orientation focuses on how “individuals experience and interact with the world,” whereas a critical qualitative research orientation informs researchers as to how these individuals are affected by “larger contextual factors” (Merriam 2002, 439, 4-5). The combination of these research designs provided a framework for examining external societal and educational factors that affected the Edwards School and the lived experience of those who populated the institution.

Three research questions guided this study: 1) How did the Edwards School change over time with regard to financial resources, student population, and curriculum?

2) What does the story reveal about the lived experience of those who populated the school: the students, the faculty, and the administration? 3) How is the Edwards School situated within the larger context of African-American secondary schooling in Texas? To address these questions, literature that examined African-American education in the American South and in Texas was reviewed, as were studies of African-American high schools from other states and first person accounts of African-Americans living in a Jim Crow society. The study utilized primary sources including public records (United States Census data and Biennial Reports of the Texas Department of Education), school archival records (school board meeting minutes, teacher certification records, and district financial data), oral histories with former students, and newspaper articles from the years in consideration.

Litwack noted that throughout the history of the United States, African-Americans have been divided over issues of priorities, goals, perceptions of whites and themselves, and how to designate themselves as a people. Terms such as “Negro,” “black,” and “Afro-American” have been utilized to describe the African-American community (1998, xvii). Throughout this work, the terms “African-American” and “black” are used as descriptors of racial identity. The terms “Negro” and “colored” are used to preserve historical accuracy when archival materials referenced African-Americans using these terms. These terms, “Negro” and “colored,” not only had historical significance, but also indicated power relationships. For example, in the late 1890s, W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington expressed a preference for the term “Negro.” However, with the advent of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, “Negro” came to represent a term coined by a hegemonic white culture and signified subjugation (Litwack 1998).

The identification of terms with power relationships increased the need for sensitivity during the completion of this study. Conducting cross-racial research requires attention to the etic/emic (outsider/insider) dilemma. The basic question this dichotomy poses is, can research be conducted effectively if one is not a member of the culture being studied? Tinsley noted that an emic perspective (native insider's view) examines behavior within a particular cultural system, striving for a deep understanding of the culture's unique meanings (2005, 183-192). An emic perspective potentially offers easy access to other cultural insiders, the ability to read non-verbal cues, and the insight for sensitive and responsible questioning (Merriam et al. 2001, 405-416). Bishop cautioned, however, insiders may be biased or too close to the culture to ask critical questions (2005). Conversely, etic (outsider) researchers must guard against a lack of cultural understanding and sensitivity which inhibits their collection of quality data. Etic researchers must acknowledge that their perspectives may differ from those of emic researchers. As a white female, this author's telling of the story of the Edwards School may differ from its telling by an African-American female or by a Latino male. Some stories of Edwards High remain unavailable for this study as former students and teachers chose not to discuss their high school experiences with someone of a different race. Researchers ultimately must decide if it is better to tell a story from an etic perspective or to allow a story to be lost because one cannot tell it from an emic perspective. The story of Edwards High School is a story that deserves preservation.

Martha Nussbaum argued that a virtue of ethics rooted in Aristotle has cultural research applications. "Various spheres of human experience that are found in all cultures represent questions to answer and choices to make-attitudes towards the ill or good fortune of others, how to treat strangers, ...and so forth" (Nussbaum 1993, 242-269). The application of such a code of ethics requires the informed consent of interviewees, a

safeguarding of privacy and confidentiality, honest and open communication regarding the intent of the study, and ensuring that data are presented accurately (Christians 2005). All history is subjective and is interpreted through the eyes of the historian or researcher. This study is no exception. However, throughout the study, every effort was made to exercise sensitivity during interviews, especially when dealing with race or other potentially difficult topics, to maintain honest and open dialogues with interviewees, to present information accurately, and to adhere to the highest ethical standards.

## **Overview of Existing Research**

Of special importance to this study, Henry Allen Bullock's 1967 work, *A History of Negro Education in the South from 1619 to the Present*, highlighted issues pertinent to secondary education for African-Americans across time periods. James Anderson's 1988 seminal book, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*, provided an overview of education for African-Americans dating from the Civil War through 1935. A chapter on high public high schools focused primarily on urban institutions from 1880-1930, and situated Texas' high schools within the larger framework of black secondary schooling in the American South. Litwack's *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (1998) recounted life for African-Americans in the South prior to desegregation. This work offered a strong contextual background of students and teachers navigating the dual class society of the South. *White Scourge* by Neil Foley (1997) situated Gonzales County within the cotton culture of Texas during the early 1900s.

Adam Fairclough's *A Class of Their Own: Black Teachers in the Segregated South* (2007) traced the odyssey of African-American teachers from the time of the Civil War through the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Further explicating the experience of African-American teachers was *Black Teachers on Teaching* by Michelle Foster

(1997), a book that related first person accounts of teachers employed post-Civil War segregation years.

As little literature exists on individual high schools in Texas, accounts from other states in the South offered suggestions of the lived experience of students in segregated schools. Faustine Jones' *A Traditional Model of Educational Excellence: Dunbar High School of Little Rock, Arkansas* (1981) explicated former students' views of teachers, curriculum, and their overall high school experience in a segregated high school. Siddle Walker's *Their Highest Potential* (1996) offered rare glimpses into a high school for blacks in small town in North Carolina. Although Edwards High School never operated as a county training school, as did the school in Siddle Walker's account, her work informed the present study regarding teachers, students, and curriculum in the rural, small town American South. These sources were by no means the only works which informed this study; however, they provided valuable insights and information.

## **Primary Sources**

Although the existing research provided context for the study, the history of Edwards High School and details about students, faculty, and curriculum were constructed from archival documents and oral histories with former Edwards' students. Despite the fact that these rich sources provided much information, some data was unavailable due to missing or incomplete documents. A warehouse fire in a Gonzales Independent School District building destroyed some early student records. The limited availability to interview former teachers and students due to the age or physical condition of individuals resulted in holes in the story of Edwards High School. Extant records often listed contradicting data or incomplete information. This lack of data prohibited the construction of a complete historical record of the institution.

## **STATE ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTS**

For more than half of the twentieth century, the state of Texas collected statistical data from county and independent school district superintendents each year and published these results biennially. In addition to statistical data, the Biennial Reports of the State Department of Education included narratives from the heads of the various divisions of the State Superintendent's Office. Through much of the early twentieth century, the State Agent for Negro Education regularly provided information in these reports about the status of black schools, the endeavors of Jeanes supervisors, accreditation efforts, and other initiatives to improve the education of African-American children and youth.<sup>1</sup>

The information contained in the reports and the formats in which it was displayed changed irregularly. Consequently, this continually changing presentation prohibited comparisons of some types of evidence over time. However, scholastic census figures, student enrollment data, teachers' certification levels, teachers' salaries, and graduation rates for black schools were published for most years. Additionally, information such as the number of libraries in schools, the average per pupil cost of instruction, and the length of school terms appeared only for a few years, but informed the study regarding the status of black education within Texas for those periods. Although the biennial reports for most years of the study were located in various libraries or archives throughout the state, the information for some years was unavailable.

In addition to the biennial reports, other state documents contained evidence about the activities of the division of classification and accreditation. These reports listed requirements for classification and the lists of schools which had been accredited during

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<sup>1</sup> Jeanes supervisors primarily were African-American women hired to assist rural black schools. They provided instruction on improving facilities, providing vocational education, and academic curriculum development. For a history of Jeanes teachers, see *The Jeanes Teacher in the United States, 1908-1933; An Account of Twenty-five Years' Experience in the Supervision of Negro Rural Schools* (Jones 1937).

the previous year, as well as institutions that experienced a change in their accreditation status. Many reports also contained narrative accounts regarding the history of classification and accreditation in the state. These reports, along with Public School Directories provided information on scholastic census data, principals' names, and accredited institutions of higher education.

Intermittently between the mid 1920s and the mid 1930s, the State Agent for Negro Education issued a series of reports on black education in the state. Copies of *Negro Education in Texas* (1926, 1931, and 1935) examined many aspects of education for African-American students in Texas. The reports detailed the work in the state of Jeanes supervisors, activities of the Julius Rosenwald Fund and the John F. Slater Fund (northern philanthropies), vocational education, high school education, and the classification and accreditation of schools. Additional state reports on African-American education, such as *School Plant Improvement in Public Forums-Negro Education* (1937) also informed the study.

#### **MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETINGS**

The Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees met monthly during the academic year to oversee the business of the district. The earliest school board minutes date from 1892, but they were found to be incomplete. In fact, only intermittent school board records exist prior to 1916. Many of these records were illegible due to the ravages of time. However, a fairly complete record of board minutes from 1916 onward informed the study about the attitudes of board members towards the Edwards School and provided insight on fiscal matters. The board minutes often contained lists of teachers employed at the schools, as well as their annual salaries. Annual budgets and inspection reports from state officials enhanced knowledge of district workings. For some years, graduating students' names were included in the board minutes. Most of the board

minutes were hand written and, at times, illegible. However, this documentation proved a valuable source of information for the study.

### **STUDENT RECORDS**

The earliest existing student record from Edwards High dates from 1935. Current district officials indicated that records prior to that year were destroyed in a warehouse fire during the 1920s. Unavailability of early records enabled the construction of a history of Edwards High School that is robust at some times and empty at other times. Therefore, a majority of this study focuses on the period between 1935 and 1965. The available student records for these years provided a wealth of information, such as the courses in which students enrolled and grades they earned in these courses. Tracing the courses that students completed enabled an analysis of the school's curriculum over the last 30 years of its existence. Student records, in many cases, also provided the gender of the student and parental occupations, offering insight on the jobs available for African-Americans in Gonzales. Addresses of the students informed an understanding of some demographics of the student body. The years that students attended the Edwards School, and at what grade levels, provided information regarding the average age of students attending high school. These records generally indicated whether or not students graduated from high school and if not, why they left the institution. Finally, the student records furnished information on standardized testing and extracurricular activities.

### **TEACHER CERTIFICATION RECORDS**

The Gonzales County Archives houses a series of ledgers containing information on teacher certifications in the Gonzales Independent School District. These ledgers contain the records of teachers who registered their certifications in Gonzales County. Entries recorded the date of the certification, the certifying body, the tenure of the

certification, and the qualifications which engendered the certification. Whereas early records indicated that the county issued most of the teaching credentials, over time the state came to be the primary issuing body for teacher certifications. Additionally, teachers acquired more and advanced preparation throughout the course of the 1900s. The increasing number of teachers who earned normal school and/or college degrees resulted in an increase of higher level teacher certifications. Recording individual teacher certifications over time also provided information about how requirements for certifications changed and how local teachers adapted to these changes. It also provided information on the longevity of teachers' employment in the district. Newspaper stories and school board minutes provided corroborating evidence for teacher certification records. Interestingly, local administrators did not register their certifications.

## **NEWSPAPERS**

The *Gonzales Daily Inquirer* newspaper was available for much of the period of the study. The Center for American History at The University of Texas at Austin houses early issues of the newspaper, as well as editions from the 1950s onward. Many of the intervening years were found at the Gonzales Public Library. Newspapers are available for some years. Thus, these missing sources remain holes in the continuous record of public school education. The Gonzales newspaper routinely provided notes on attendance data, reports of sporting competitions, and articles highlighting school events. An analysis of the coverage of white and black high school events provided glimpses of racial attitudes and local issues which influenced education in Gonzales, particularly about Edwards High School.

## **ORAL HISTORIES**

Six individuals were interviewed for this study. Four were alumni of Edwards High School. The former county superintendent (1950-1978) was interviewed as was a counselor who worked at the school for one to two years prior to integration (1964-1965). Both of these individuals were white and the alumni of the school were African-American. These interviews not only served to corroborate information contained in school board minutes or newspaper accounts, they also added a richness and personal quality to the story that can be obtained only from first person accounts. These interviews were conducted in Gonzales, either at the home of individuals, at the Edwards School, or at the county archives building.

## **MISCELLANEOUS DOCUMENTS**

Throughout the course of the study, a variety of documents added to the pool of information regarding the Edwards School and educational opportunities for African-Americans in Gonzales. The Gonzales County Archives houses many of these documents. Early financial records provided the means for a comparison between white and black teacher salaries in Gonzales. For example, a paper found tucked into teacher certification records contained the examination results for several white and black teachers and included data regarding the subjects on which teachers were examined and likely, the subjects they were required to teach.

The 1951 yearbook from Edwards High School informed the study about various clubs, student organizations, sports, and activities at the school. This was the only yearbook that could be attained from Edwards' alumni. The yearbook also portrayed the faculty members who, according to some former students, contributed untold hours to provide a well rounded experience for the students at Edwards High. This information, along with that contained in subsequent yearbooks at Gonzales High, the town's high

school for white students, permitted a comparison of student involvement, black and white, in extra-curricular activities between the years when a segregated Edwards High School operated and after black students enrolled at Gonzales High School.

Two early annual reports from the Gonzales city schools provided data on faculty members, teacher institutes, school terms, attendance rates, and corporal punishment. In these reports, greater attention was afforded to the discussion of the schools for whites in Gonzales than to the school for blacks. The documents outlined curriculum for the white schools in the district but did not include information about the curriculum for African-American schools.

A packet titled “Planning Toward Graduation” (1960) informed the study as to the course offerings at Edwards High. It also listed college entrance requirements for the historically black colleges and universities in the state. Interestingly, the document counseled students on who should attend college and the requirements for success in higher education.

## **Organization of the Dissertation**

This dissertation contains six chapters. The first chapter provides an overview of African-American education in Texas. Although the state’s several constitutions and numerous legislative statutes provided for the education of all of the state’s children, implementation of these mandates was uneven between the races and, likely, never occurred. This chapter discusses the growth of Texas and considers scholastic populations, enrollment figures, and attendance rates over time. High school enrollment figures and graduation rates are highlighted. Additionally the chapter calls attention to three factors which acted as catalysts for enhanced educational opportunities for African-American students.

Chapter two focuses on the growth of Gonzales and the development of the town's school for black students. Population figures, enrollment data, and graduation rates are considered. The chapter examines the school's role in the larger African-American community of Gonzales and the fiscal inequity between the white and black schools in the Gonzales Independent School District.

Chapter three considers the students of Edwards High School. Student records provided information for analysis of some demographics of the student body. Over time, African-American high school students remained enrolled in school for longer periods and graduated at higher rates. The chapter traces attendance patterns and graduation rates for Edwards High School students. It also follows the students' participation in extracurricular activities from the mid 1930s through the mid 1960s, noting changes in these patterns that occurred due to the desegregation of the district's high schools.

Without teachers, Edwards High School would have ceased to exist. Chapter four examines the teachers and administrators who served the Edwards High students. Teachers' certification records and salaries highlighted the inequities in finances and resources between the town's educational institutions. The chapter explores the backgrounds of teachers and administrators and considers these individual's relationships with students and with the black community of Gonzales.

Many Southerners promoted an industrial focused education for blacks. Other individuals felt that a traditional liberal education would serve black students best. Chapter five discusses the South's overarching debate on the nature of education for African-American students and situates Edwards High School within this debate. The chapter examines the curricular changes that occurred at Edwards from the mid 1930s through the mid 1960s and explores the state's role in fostering these changes.

The final chapter of the dissertation, chapter six, offers a summary and conclusions based on the research. The utilization of archival material and oral histories provided a picture of a segregated high school which operated in a small Texas town during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The materials utilized in this research enabled an examination of the school's educational structure, as well as the experiences of those who populated the school. This study resulted in a narrative, albeit an incomplete one, of one of the many small-town high schools for African-Americans which operated throughout Texas prior to desegregation.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INEQUITY AND EDUCATION IN TEXAS**

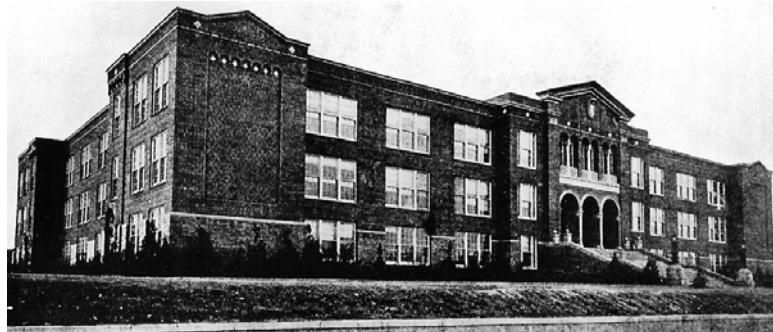


Illustration 1.1: Sunset High School in Dallas, Texas (From the collections of the Texas/Dallas History and Archives Division, Dallas Public Library)

Following the Civil War, schooling for blacks, as for whites, was irregular at best and normally consisted only of elementary grades. Education was provided primarily by elite, private institutions and fewer than three percent of students aged 13-17 attended regularly (Anderson 1988, 35-36). In 1866, Congress established the Freedman's Bureau to assist former slaves in the South with one task of the organization being to address the educational needs of the newly freed slaves. The Texas Bureau was led by General Oliver Howard, the commander of the Army of Texas, with General E. M. Gregory serving as his assistant (Sutton 1912, Book 7). Southern whites openly were hostile to the newly freed blacks and burned many of the schools established by the Freedman's Bureau in the late 1860s. Despite the dangers, blacks flocked to the often overcrowded bureau schools (Sitton and Conrad 2005). As many as fifty thousand freedmen in Texas learned to read and write under the auspices of bureau schools (Bullock 1967).

In 1872, the Freedman's Bureau was abolished and with its closure, southern blacks lost many of the educational gains which they had achieved during the previous seven years. The Texas legislature, led by Reconstructionists, passed the Constitution of 1876 and the School Law of 1884, advancing schooling for the state's black students. The statutes mandated segregation of the races, but educational provisions for both races were included (Wilson 2001). Although legally blacks were to be afforded an education, the establishment of black schools fell to local officials who did not share the Reconstructionists' zeal for black education. The schools that were established often were of poor quality and were afforded few resources for the education of students. In 1891, only 120 graded schools for black students were reported to be operating in Texas (State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1893).

In 1896, the United States Supreme Court issued a ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Although the case involved a Louisiana statue requiring separation of the races on trains, the ruling had far-reaching implications for education. The Supreme Court issued a dictum which stated:

Laws permitting, and even requiring [separation of the races] in places where they are liable to be brought into contact do not necessarily imply inferiority of either race to the other, and have been generally, if not universally, recognized as within the competency of the state legislatures in the exercise of their police power. The most common instance of this is connected with the establishment of separate schools for white and colored children, which has been held a valid exercise of the legislative power even by courts of states where the political rights of the colored race have been longest and most earnestly enforced (Ashmore 1954, 11).

With this ruling, the Court acknowledged segregation as a general American practice and firmly established dual systems of education for white and black students.

In Texas, as in the rest of the South, most of the secondary institutions initially were for white students. Secondary institutions for white students operated more

frequently after the turn of the century, whereas high schools for African-American students developed more slowly. In his 1916 report on Negro education, Thomas Jesse Jones noted that of the 64 public high schools for Negroes operated in the South, only 47 taught four year courses of study and of these, more than half were located in Texas, Kentucky, Tennessee, and West Virginia (1917, 23).

The scholastic population of Texas grew throughout the early decades of the 1900s. Black and white students enrolled in school in increasing numbers. By the mid 1920s, blacks were gaining greater access to secondary educations. The Great Depression of the 1930s and the United State's participation in World War II during the 1940s created fluctuations in enrollment patterns. Inequities in funding plagued black schools in Texas from their inception through their closings due to integration. Thomas Jesse Jones described the per capita expenditure for black schools as "utterly inadequate" (1917, 24). Throughout the first half of the 1900s, schools for blacks in the state accounted for less than 10% of the state's total education property, even though the black students represented a much higher proportion of the academic population. Despite the fact that the state apportioned funds to school districts on a per pupil basis, regardless of the students' race, local districts were free to spend the funds as they saw fit, with most of the money going to the white schools. For black schools the result was inferior buildings, fewer teaching resources, and second-hand, outdated textbooks. Parents often were forced to contribute materials and/or funds to support their children's education, a situation referred to by Anderson as double taxation (1988).

In May, 1954, the Supreme Court handed down a ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, declaring that segregation in education inherently was unequal. Another Court decision the following year ordered schools to integrate with all deliberate speed. Although a few school districts in Texas integrated their schools within only a few

years of the *Brown* ruling, many districts in the state fought desegregation well into the 1970s. Eventually, the federal government forced all of Texas' school districts to operate desegregated schools. Desegregation was neither quick, nor painless; however, it provided African-American youth in Texas with access to greater educational resources.

## **Legal Underpinnings of Black Education in Texas**

Throughout Texas' history, governmental bodies codified a system of education for the youth of the state. Although the early laws established an educational system, the state provided no financial support and schooling was scant during the early years of the state. Immediately after the Civil War, Texas created a highly centralized educational system for white students only. Reconstructionists subsequently passed a constitution in 1869 that called for the education of all students, both black and white. To counter the radical measures of the Reconstructionists, the Texas legislature transferred control of schools from the state to local districts and called for the separate education for black and white students. Although the State Board of Education appropriated funds to local districts based on total student enrollment and attendance, distribution of the these funds to local schools remained at the discretion of local school boards. These local entities funneled the majority of funds to schools for white students.

The Gilmer-Aiken laws passed by the Texas Legislature in 1949 addressed inequities in the educational system and attempted to equalize the education received by white and African-American students. Despite the Supreme Court's *Brown* ruling in 1954, very few school districts in Texas desegregated their schools. Not until 1970 did the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District rule that the Texas Educational Agency had the responsibility for desegregating the schools and authorized the Court to oversee the desegregation of the state's schools.

## **THE NINETEENTH CENTURY**

From its earliest days as a northern territory of Mexico, Texas' governmental officials worked to establish a system of education. Although these officials understood the importance of an educated populace, their implementation of a system of schooling often was another matter. Due to the large size of the territory, enforcement of educational initiatives was difficult. The lack of centralized funding for an educational system provided a convenient excuse for local entities to avoid establishing schools. Early Texans were concerned more with protecting their land from Indians, from the Mexican army, and subsequently, from Union troops.

In the early 1800s, the territory's governing body drafted a constitution in which Articles 215-217 of the 1827 Constitution of the State of Coahuila and Texas stated:

In all the towns of the state a suitable number of primary schools shall be established, wherein shall be taught reading, writing, arithmetic, the catechism of the Christian [Catholic] religion, a brief and simple explanation of this constitution, and that of the republic, the rights and duties of man in society, and whatever else may conduce the better education of youth (Constitution of the State of Coahuila and Texas 1827, 341-342).

Subsequently, the Constitution of 1833 noted "It shall be a particular duty of the government to patronize and cherish the interests of literature, of science, and the arts; and as soon as practicable, to establish schools" (Constitution or Form of Government of the State of Texas 1833, 5). By 1836, Texas had separated from Mexico and formed an independent republic complete with a new constitution. Although the new nation was unable to provide for an educational system at the time, the founders noted that it was the duty of Congress to provide a general system of education when circumstances permitted (The Constitution of the Republic of Texas 1836, 18-19).

Between 1836 and 1840, several legislative initiatives resulted in nearly three million acres of land being set aside for schools. Despite the fact that education received prominent listing in the various constitutions, no public system of schooling was established in the state. Not until Texas entered the United States was a formal educational system implemented. The Constitution of 1845 established a system of free schools for white students throughout the state by dedicating one tenth of the state's annual tax revenue to be placed into a perpetual fund for schools. Additionally, the document indicated that schools should be supported further through property taxation (Constitution of the State of Texas 1845, 18).

As the United States headed toward the Civil War, Texas found itself embroiled in the slavery debate. The Constitution of 1836 had provided for the continued bondage of slaves who were brought into the state by their owners. In fact, no free blacks were permitted to reside permanently in the republic without the consent of Congress (The Constitution of the Republic of Texas 1836). In 1861, Texas seceded from the United States and joined the Confederate States of America. Operating under this new status, the state ratified yet another constitution. This new treatise reconfirmed the educational provisions established under the constitution of 1845 and continued the taxation of property and a fund for the support of the free public schools for white students (Constitution of the State of Texas 1861).

On January 1, 1863, Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation freeing slaves in all union states. With the return of southern states to the Union in 1865, all previous slaves were now freemen. The reformation of the Union resulted in yet another Texas constitution. This document was drafted by a convention of pre-war

politicians and unionists determined to carry out the mandates of presidential reconstruction (Moneyhon 2001). The combination of powerful, pre-war Democrats and moderate unionists resulted in a more conservative document than was created in much of the Reconstruction South. The Constitution of 1866 established the position of Superintendent of Public Instruction and created a public school fund for the education of all the white scholastics in the state. Further, the Constitution permitted the legislature to levy an educational tax upon blacks in the state which was to be appropriated for the maintenance of a separate school system for “Africans or persons of African descent” (Constitution of the State of Texas 1866).

The legislature subsequently passed the “Radical” Constitution of 1869 which established a highly centralized public free school system. The Constitution called for the education of all children between the ages of six and eighteen for at least four months per year without regard to race. This document outraged many of the citizens of Texas. The education laws of 1870 and 1871 carried out the dictums of the 1869 Constitution (Davis 1934). The growing resentment to the radical laws of the Reconstructionists led the Texas legislature to transfer control of schools to local school boards in 1873.

A new Constitution passed in 1876 set aside one fourth of the general revenue of the state, as well as a poll tax of one dollar on all males between the ages of twenty-one and sixty, for the benefit of the public schools. Importantly, this Constitution stated “Separate schools shall be provided for the white and colored children, and impartial provision shall be made for both.” (Constitution of the State of Texas 1876).

As local control of education became more entrenched, the legislature worked to maintain a threshold of continuity throughout the state. In 1884, the legislature

lengthened the school term to six months from four. Public school funds were appropriated to counties based on scholastic census figures, regardless of the race of the students. However, the document clearly articulated that schools were to be segregated. Any school which contained students of both the “white” and “colored” race would not receive assistance from the public school fund. The bill went so far as to define the “colored race” as “all persons of mixed blood, descended from Negro ancestry, to the third generation inclusive.” However, the legislation stipulated that colored children should receive the benefit of the public school fund. Although the bills made provisions for black trustees, at least ten residents with school age children were required to submit written applications one month before the election in order for black nominees to appear on the ballot. No such requirement was stipulated for white candidates (Laws of the State of Texas 1884).

The 1884 statutes mandated that the state superintendent compile an annual report on the condition of the public schools in Texas prior to each regular legislative session and required the State Board of Education to make the apportionment of the school fund available to counties on or before the fifteenth of July each year. The legislation gave communities the option of enacting a tax to pay for the construction of new schools, and determined the election procedures and terms for local school board trustees. Additionally, the 1884 legislation specified examination and certification requirements, as well as salary caps, for teachers.

By stating that counties were to be apportioned funds based on scholastic census numbers and that children of each race were to received funds pro rata, state laws seemed to imply that black and white schools were to receive equal pro rata funding. However,

an 1895 Texas House of Representatives bill stated that the black and white trustees were to set the school term and to reach agreement on a division of apportioned funds. Only after such an agreement could the superintendent enter into contracts with teachers. Should the two groups be unable to reach agreement, the duty of dividing funds between the black and white schools fell to the superintendent (General Laws of Texas 1895). Through this legislation, the white legislature almost certainly guaranteed that the white schools would receive a disproportionate share of funds. Due to the longstanding tradition of white supremacy in the South, black trustees would have been unlikely to challenge the white trustees' spending decisions. If black trustees dared disagree, the bill gave the white superintendent the authority to decide how funds were distributed.

In 1895, House Bill 196 eliminated the provision for three white and three black school board trustees. This legislation stipulated that a total of three trustees were to be elected. In most instances, this meant that the control of schools, white and black, was turned over to white trustees. Interestingly, the normal house rule of reading bills on three consecutive days was suspended for the passage of this statute. The bill was passed by a two-thirds majority voice vote in both the house and senate chambers and took effect immediately. The reason for the exception stated in the legislation was that election time was near and there were a great number of bills on the legislative calendar (General Laws of Texas 1899). By the end of the nineteenth century, the concept of universal education had received general acceptance (Davis 1934). Beginning as a state function, local control of schools firmly was entrenched by the end of the 1890s. Although African-Americans had gained access to education, they were required to attend segregated schools and largely were unrepresented in the control of these institutions.

The Texas Legislature, appeared to provide separate but equal education to white and black students by apportioning funding to counties on a pro rata basis regardless of the race of the students. However, the lawmakers handed control of those funds to white superintendents and schools boards which doled out money as they chose. In most cases, this meant that the majority of funds went to the schools for white students. Many whites feared black education; though whites denounced black ignorance, they feared black intelligence. If blacks remained ignorant and illiterate, they were more tolerant of white supremacy. The idea was to make black education compatible with the prevailing racial hierarchy, that of white supremacy and black subservience. Whites feared that black education would elevate blacks to the same level as whites. Thus, the classroom became the mechanism for preserving the prevailing racial hierarchy (Litwack 1998, 90-101; Davis 1946).

## **TWENTIETH CENTURY**

Educational issues continued to occupy the legislature throughout the twentieth century. In 1905, the Twenty-ninth Legislature further cemented local control of schools by permitting any city or town to acquire exclusive control of the public free schools within the city limits; thus, the legislature created the first independent school districts. Additionally, the law reiterated separate schools for white and black children, designated teacher certifications, and determined the length of school terms (General Laws of Texas 1905).

In 1913, the legislature expanded the age range for students attending free public schools. The Thirty-third Legislature determined that all children between the ages of seven and twenty-one were eligible to attend public schools free of charge (Davis 1934).

Texas passed a compulsory attendance law in 1915, which mandated that all children between the ages of six and eighteen attend school (State Compulsory School Attendance Laws 2007).

A bill which proved significant for high schools during the first half of the twentieth century was Senate Bill 54. In passing this legislation, the Texas Legislature appropriated money to comply with the Federal Vocational Education Act, commonly called the Smith-Hughes Act (General Laws of Texas 1917). Funds were set aside for the promotion of agriculture, trades, and industries, as well as the training of teachers in these subjects. The funding of agricultural and vocational subjects influenced high school curriculum for African-American and white students for many years.

The Texas Legislature reiterated that “all available public school funds of this state shall be appropriated in each county for the education alike of white and Negro children, and impartial provisions shall be made for both races” (as cited in Lane 1932, 396-399). As with the language in previous constitutions and legislation, the 1925 law apportioned money to the counties on a pro rata basis, without regard to race. Although the law stated the impartial provisions were made for both races, “impartial provisions” was not clearly defined and the interpretation of the term was relegated to local school officials. Often the local school officials disregarded the concept entirely and spent state dollars as they wished.

In 1947, the Texas legislature addressed some of the many inequities in the state’s educational system, appointing an eighteen member commission, known as the Gilmer-Aiken Committee. This committee focused on three major areas of reform: reorganization (consolidation) of school districts, equalization of the distribution of wealth among districts, and improvement in student attendance in the state’s schools (House Concurrent Resolution No. 48 1947). The committee worked for 14 months

before presenting their report to the legislature in September, 1948. The Fifty-first Texas Legislature adopted the committee's recommendation in a series of three senate bills in 1949. The first, Senate Bill No. 115, reorganized the State Department of Education into the Texas Education Agency and balanced state guidance with local school district control. Senate Bill No. 116 defined the Minimum Foundation School Program and established a minimum salary schedule for teachers and administrators. The salary schedule equalized salaries between elementary and high school teachers, as well as between black and white teachers. The final portion of the legislation, Senate Bill No. 117, established a Foundation School Fund Budget Committee to determine the amount of money available for the Minimum Foundation School Program (Kuehlem 2004).

In May, 1954, the United States Supreme Court banned segregation in public schools through its ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. Although a few districts in Texas desegregated their schools within a few years of the *Brown* ruling, the state was slow to act in any measurable way to desegregate the schools. In 1970, Judge William Wayne of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District in Tyler, Texas, ruled in *United States v. Texas* that the Texas Educational Agency was required to assume responsibility for desegregating Texas' public schools. The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the court order, more commonly called Civil Action 5281, and authorized the Court to oversee the implementation of Texas' public school desegregation (Kuehlem 2004).

Although the constitutional mandates and education codes noted here were major factors in the evolution of education for blacks in Texas, they by no means were the only laws which affected schooling for students of color. Other bills passed during the biennial meetings of the legislature influenced education. Likewise, local statutes and taxation, as

well as community practices, impacted education not only for African-American students, but for all students in the state.

## **Growth and Change in Black Education**

During the early years of Texas, African-Americans increasingly demanded educational opportunities for youth. As more schools became available, greater numbers of students attended these institutions and graduation from high schools increased. Despite black youths' increasing participation in the educational system, schools for African-Americans received an inequitable portion of the funds with which to educate students. Although the state of Texas apportioned monies to districts based on the total student population, local officials determined how these funds were distributed to individual schools. As residents of a former slave-holding state, Texans retained an antebellum mindset regarding blacks' place in society. Many whites saw little need for an educated black populace. They felt that educated blacks might assume equal status with whites, a totally unacceptable concept for these white Texans. Therefore, educational opportunities at the secondary and college level were limited for African-Americans in Texas and throughout the South. However, blacks viewed education as a tool for advancing the race and enrolled their children in schools in increasing numbers.

### **1880 – 1920: THE EARLY YEARS**

Between 1880 and 1920, the population of Texas increased rapidly, from 1.5 million to more than 4.5 million (Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census 1880; Department of Commerce 1920). The population of African-Americans in the state increased, but at a slower rate than did whites. This slower rate of increase resulted in blacks accounting for a smaller percentage of the total state

population. During this same period, the scholastic population changes mirrored the overall population in the state. The overall number of students enrolled in schools nearly tripled between 1880 and 1920, from nearly 450,000 students in 1881 to 1,159,919 in 1920 (State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1893, 1922). As the black student population grew more slowly than did the white population, blacks represented a smaller portion of the overall school enrollment, declining from 25% in 1891 to 18.3% in 1920 (State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1893, 1922). The number of African-American students in Texas high schools declined during the first decade of the 1900s, but increased between 1910 and 1920.

Throughout the early years of Texas education, whites received a disproportionately large share of educational funds. Although local school boards received an annual disbursement from the State Department of Education based on total student population, these local officials determined how the funds were spent on local schools. As many whites viewed the education of blacks as a means of perpetuating a subservient black population, local officials had no impetus to allot equal funds to schools for African-American youth.

The 1880 scholastic census recorded 226,439 students of school age residing in the state of Texas (State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1902). Of this number 176,245 were attending public schools. Of the students enrolled in schools, 75% were white and 25% were black. The average daily attendance for whites and blacks was similar. In 1891, 63% of whites and 58% of blacks attended school regularly (Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census 1880). As provided for in the Constitution of 1876, black and white students attended school in separate facilities.

The percentages of black and white students in the public schools closely mirrored the state population of the day. The 1880 United States Census noted that

393,384 of the 1,591,749 individuals in Texas were “colored”, approximately 25% of the population (Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census 1880). This number was more than double the number of blacks recorded in 1860. Although the number of blacks in the state had grown dramatically, their percentage of the total state population decreased from 30% in 1860 to 25% in 1880 (Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census 1880; Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930 1932).

By 1900, the population of Texas had reached 3,048,710 (Census Reports: Population 1901). Of this number 729, 217 were of school age and 651,767 (89%) enrolled in the public schools of the state. Black students comprised 21% of the state’s enrollment and whites accounted for 79% of the enrolled students. Black and white students attended school at a similar rate, approximately 65% of the time. However, white students attended school only slightly longer with an average school term of 112 days and black students attended 104 days per year (State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1902). The near parity in the length of school terms between whites and blacks in Texas was not typical of much of the South. Bullock noted that the disparity in the length school terms for blacks and whites in states such as Mississippi and Alabama was as high as 40 days per year, a figure much higher than the eight day differential recorded in Texas (1967, 176-177). The number of schools for blacks (graded and ungraded) represented 20% of the public schools in the state, a figure congruent with the percentage of blacks in Texas. However, one third of the white school houses were considered to be in good condition compared to only 16% of black schools. Conversely, 30% of black schools were listed to be in bad condition compared to only 19% of white schools. Although 27% of the funds dispersed to local districts were designated for black

schools, local school boards determined how the funds were distributed within the district (State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1902).

These statistics seem to indicate that blacks received an equitable education to that of white students. Despite the fact that students attended school for nearly equivalent terms,<sup>2</sup> other aspects of education highlight the inequities experienced by black students. Only 32 high schools for blacks existed and educated a mere 6% of the state's high school population. Conversely, 215 high schools for whites educated 14,904 students, or 94% of the high school population. Additionally, students in black schools had scant access to libraries, or library materials, unlike white students who routinely had library materials (Jones 1917)<sup>3</sup>. Of the 550 school libraries in the state, only 10% were found in black schools. Further, these few school libraries for blacks housed a mere 9% of all the volumes found in school libraries in the state (State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1902). Although black students received the same *kind* of education as did white students, it was inferior in both quantity and quality (Ashmore 1954). Fairclough noted, "The most obvious difference between white and black schools was that the latter had less of everything" (2007, 9).

Although black students accounted for 21% of the state's public school enrollment, they had access to only 15% of the school desks in the state, illustrating an inequity in material resources between white and black schools (State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1902). The situation was typical throughout the South. Not only did black students often have fewer resources, the equipment they did have generally was handed down from a white school and was in poor condition. Textbooks, often destined for disposal at white schools, were given to the black schools (Foster 1997; Morgan

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<sup>2</sup> Whites attended school for 112 days per year and black students attended for 104 days.

<sup>3</sup> Although many of the black schools in Jones' report were private schools, public schools existed in the state.

1995; Litwack 1998). The texts were soiled, missing pages, and often were falling apart. Local school trustees controlled the funds disbursed by the state and often directed funds to white schools at the expense of black students' education. A convenient excuse for discrimination in the allocation of funds between blacks and whites was that the type of education blacks needed was less complex and therefore, less expensive than that needed by white students (Bullock 1967). Blacks did not share proportionately in the extension of public secondary education available to white students. Further, between 1880 and 1920, almost all of the black high schools were located in urban areas (Anderson 1988).

The largest population of blacks in the state resided in the eastern and northern portions of the state, known as the cotton belt (Foley 1997). Due to their higher numbers, African-American parents in these areas more easily influenced local officials when lobbying for the education of their students. School board trustees in counties with fewer black residents felt less pressure to provide adequate resources for the black students in their districts. This lack of parental influence resulted in an ever-widening gap between the resources provided for the education of white students and that of black students in the state. Although evident inequities existed, the state education agency did not intervene. This inequity in education was evident not only in Texas, but throughout the American South.

By 1910, Texas' population had increased by more than 350,000 to 3,896,542. Although the African-American population had increased by more than 750,000 since 1900, its percentage of the total population of the state had declined. In 1900, blacks comprised 20.4% of the state population, but by 1910 only 17.7%. Conversely, the percentage of whites in the state had increased from 79.5% in 1900 to 82.2% of the total population in 1910 (Thirteenth Census of the United States: Population 1910).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> In 1910, Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos and Hindus accounted for the remainder of the population (Thirteenth Census of the United States: Population 1910).

Table 1.1: Texas Population Figures 1880-1920

<b>Year</b>	<b>Entire State</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
<b>1880<sup>a</sup></b>	1,591,749	393,384	24.7	1,197,237	75.2
<b>1890<sup>b</sup></b>	2,235,928	488,171	21.8	1,745,935	78.1
<b>1900<sup>b</sup></b>	3,048,710	620,722	20.4	2,426,669	79.5
<b>1910<sup>c</sup></b>	3,896,542	690,049	17.7	3,204,848	82.2
<b>1920<sup>d</sup></b>	4,663,228	741,694	15.9	3,918,165	84.0

<sup>a</sup>(Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census 1880)

<sup>b</sup>(Census Reports: Population 1901)

<sup>c</sup>(Thirteenth Census of the United States: Population 1910)

<sup>d</sup>(Department of Commerce 1920)

The scholastic population of the state increased dramatically between 1900 and 1910. The Seventeenth Biennial Report of the State Department of Education noted that blacks represented 20% of the students of school age, slightly higher than the 17.7% that they represented in the general population. Schooling during this period occurred primarily in the elementary grades. Texas' high school population in 1910 represented only three percent of all students enrolled in school (State Department of Education 1911). However, of those students enrolled in high schools, blacks continued to be dramatically underrepresented (see Table 1.3). Of the nearly 25,000 Texas students receiving a high school education in 1910, only slightly more than 1,000 (4%) were listed as "colored." Black students attended school as regularly as did white students. White and black students averaged a daily attendance rate of 61% (State Department of Education 1911).

Table 1.2: Texas Scholastic Data 1891-1920

	Scholastic Population			Student Enrollment		
	State	% Black	% White	State	% Black	% White
<b>1891<sup>a</sup></b>	494,213	25.1	74.9	443,885	23.8	76.2
<b>1900<sup>b</sup></b>	729,217	21.5	77.4	651,767	20.9	79.5
<b>1910<sup>c</sup></b>	949,006	20.2	79.7	821,631	19.1	80.9
<b>1920<sup>d</sup></b>	1,271,157	18.3	81.6	1,159,919	17.5	82.5

<sup>a</sup>(State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1893)

<sup>b</sup>(State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1902)

<sup>c</sup>(State Department of Education 1911)

<sup>d</sup>(State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1922)

Table 1.3: Texas High School Enrollment 1900-1920

	State	Black	% Total	White	% Total
<b>1900a</b>	14,904	921	6.2	13,983	93.8
<b>1910b</b>	24,990	1,026	4.0	23,964	96.0
<b>1920c</b>	126,696	6,200	4.9	120,496	95.1

<sup>a</sup>(State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1902)

<sup>b</sup>(State Department of Education 1911)

<sup>c</sup>(State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1922)

Students in urban areas attended school at slightly higher rates than did rural students (Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930 1932). Students in Texas, however, fared better than did others in the South. In 1916, “Texas, with more than 30 black public high schools, had more than three times as many as any other southern state” (Anderson 1988, 199). Black students’ attendance often was seasonal. Much of Texas’ black population (60%) lived in rural areas and was engaged in agriculture, largely as sharecroppers (Branda 1976). Children, especially boys, were kept at home during

planting and harvesting seasons to help in the fields (Fairclough 2007; Chafe, Gavins, and Korstad 2001). Often, their labor and wages were needed to help families survive. Although many whites supported a vocationally focused education for black youth, less than 10% of Texas' manual training and domestic arts budget was spent on black vocational education. Although Texas had a large white population engaged in agriculture, fewer of the children were needed to work these fields because the farmers had better machinery and often rented land to sharecroppers for added income. Additionally, white youth studied agriculture in school and garnered 90.3% of the state's vocational expenditures (State Department of Education 1911). The enhanced agricultural education that whites received allowed them to be knowledgeable of the latest farming techniques and implement more efficient farming techniques.

When attending school, black students had to learn in larger classes with fewer teachers than did white students. Although black students comprised 19% of the state's enrollment in public schools, black teachers represented only 15% of the total teaching force (State Department of Education 1911). Additionally, black students continued to have shorter school terms. During the 1909-1910 school year, the average term in white schools was 139 days per year whereas black schools averaged only 135 days per year (Bullock 1967, 177). Local school officials reasoned that black students attended school less often than did white students; therefore, they required less financial support. However, the diminished resources forced black teachers and parents to supplement school districts' meager funding.

By 1920, the situation had changed little. The population of Texas had grown to more than four million, of which nearly 16% were listed as "Negro" (Department of Commerce 1920, 101). Although blacks comprised almost 20% of all students enrolled in Texas' schools, they continued to account for only five percent of the high school

population (State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1922). Texas had 150 public schools for blacks doing at least one year of high school work, but only 34 of these offered a four-year course of study (State Department of Education 1921). Black students accounted for only 5% of the high school graduates (State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1922). The average amount spent on the education of a black student was less than half of that spent for the education of a white student (Jones 1917). Records indicate that the average cost of educating a white student in 1920 was \$28.22. Only \$11.40 was spent on the education of a black student (State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1922). Black schooling was viewed as being a necessary tool to provide workers, mainly agricultural or domestic workers, for the white ruling class, continuing the dual class structure begun during the era of slavery. State sanctioned discrimination worked to undermine the delivery of educational services to African-American youth (Fultz 1995, 401-422). As Jim Crow laws became firmly established, blacks were relegated to second class status in all walks of life, including education.

Other educational resources remained inequitable as well. Sadly, black schools housed only four percent of the school libraries in the state and stocked their meager shelves with less than three percent of the total volumes present in school libraries. As in 1900, black schools accounted for a mere five percent of the total value of school property in the state (State Department of Education 1925).

Despite their increasing numbers, African-American youth represented a declining percentage of the scholastic population in Texas between 1880 and 1920. The decline in population coupled with prejudicial white attitudes led to black youth receiving an inequitable share of the state's educational resources. The declining high school enrollment of black youth during the early years in Texas would be reversed in coming decades. Increased focus on African-American education in the state and new high school

accreditation efforts elevated African-Americans' desire for equal educational opportunities for all students.

### **1920-1940: THE INTERWAR YEARS**

Between 1920 and 1940, the African-American population of Texas increased much more slowly than did the white population. Consequently, blacks represented a smaller percentage of the overall state population. Yet African-American youth represented an increasing percentage of the students enrolled in Texas's schools, especially at the high school level. After the stock market crash in 1929, all students were encouraged to attend high school as a means to keep them out of the job market. Increased high school enrollment necessitated more schools. Three additional factors aided in the advancement of African-American education in Texas during this period. County training schools were built in rural areas with the assistance of northern philanthropies. The number of classified and accredited high schools for blacks increased dramatically during the late 1920s and 1930s. Additionally, annual conferences brought together black and white leaders and focused their attention on the needs of African-Americans in Texas.

Throughout the 1920s, enrollment in Texas' schools grew. The academic population of white students generally grew slightly faster than did that of black students. Records indicate that school enrollment across the United States grew and, as in Texas, white students comprised an increasing portion of the academic population (Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930 1932). In Texas, the ratio of black and white students enrolled in schools mirrored their general population numbers. During the period from 1921 through 1928, blacks comprised 16% - 19% of the scholastic population, depending on the year, and were enrolled in school at similar rates. As in previous years, blacks were subject to shorter school terms. Black schools averaged only 147 days per year,

compared to 152 days at white schools (Bullock 1967, 177). Beginning with the 1929-1930 school year, the State Department of Education enumerated six year old students for the first time. This addition resulted in larger scholastic census numbers than had been seen in previous years.

The high school population increased during this period as well. In 1921, 6,200 black students were enrolled in Texas' high schools (State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1922). Only 25 of the 130 black high schools in the state were four-year schools (Smith 1940). Between 1920 and 1940, high school enrollment increased, as did the number of four-year high schools. By 1940, more than 38,000 black youth enrolled in over 115 four-year approved high schools (State Department of Education 1943; Smith 1940). Not only were more students attending high school, but they were graduating in greater numbers. Between 1921 and 1940, the number of high school graduates increased over 800%.

Urban students attended school more often than did their rural counterparts. Despite the growth of education, more than eight percent of the state's population over the age of 10 was illiterate. The rate of illiteracy among blacks was double that of the general population. Not surprisingly, illiteracy rates among adults were highest in rural areas where educational opportunities were more limited. More than one quarter of the black, adult, rural population was considered illiterate in 1920 (Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930 1932). An increasing number of rural African-American children were able to attain at least an elementary education, an opportunity denied to the preceding generation.

Table 1.4: Texas Population Figures 1920-1940

	<b>Entire State</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
<b>1920<sup>a</sup></b>	4,663,228	741,694	15.9	3,918,165	84.0
<b>1930<sup>b</sup></b>	5,824,715	854,964	14.7	4,283,401	73.6
<b>1940<sup>c</sup></b>	6,414,824	960,276	14.3	5,487,544	85.5

<sup>a</sup>(Department of Commerce 1920)

<sup>b</sup>(Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930 1932)

<sup>c</sup>(Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940 1942)

As noted in Table 1.4, the black population of Texas had grown to more than 800,000 by 1930. However, as in 1920, blacks represented a decreased percentage of the total population in the state. Census records noted that blacks accounted for 14.7% of the population in 1930, down from 15.9% in 1920 and 17.7% in 1910 (Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930 1932). As in much of the South, Texas witnessed a migration of blacks to the North and to southern cities. Black students comprised 17% of the overall scholastic population of the state and 16% of the enrolled student population (State Department of Education *The Twenty-Seventh Biennial Report* 1933). The increase in high school enrollment outpaced that of the elementary grades. During the 1920-21 school year, 6,200 students were enrolled in black high schools in Texas (State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1922). By 1930-31, that number swelled to more than 19,000. These students were educated in approximately 300 high schools, of which 90 offered four-year courses (State Department of Education *Negro Education in Texas* 1931). During the 1930-1931 school year, more than 2,000 black students in Texas graduated from high school, a dramatic increase from the 653 graduates recorded for the 1920-1921 school year (State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1922). Although the number of students graduating from African-American high schools increased greatly,

blacks accounted for less than seven percent of the total high school graduates in 1930 (State Department of Education *The Twenty-Seventh Biennial Report* 1933).

Additionally, more students attended school regularly. During the 1924-25 school year, black students attended school roughly 60% of the time. The rate of daily attendance grew to over 70% for the 1930-31 school year. Attendance rates for white students grew at a slower rate. Between the 1924-25 and the 1930-31 school years, the daily attendance rate for white students increased by five percentage points, from 70% to 75%. Urban students continued to attend school more regularly than did students in rural areas (State Department of Education *The Twenty-Fourth Biennial Report* 1926).

The illiteracy rate declined between 1920 and 1930, as it had during the previous decade. The rate of illiteracy for children between the ages of 10 and 20 was significantly lower than that for adults. For white adults living in Texas, who were born in the United States, the illiteracy rate in rural areas was less than six percent. For rural black adults, the illiteracy rate was more than three times that of whites (Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930 1932). This fact is significant in light of the fact that 43% of blacks lived in rural areas and were engaged in agriculture. Seventy-six percent of African-Americans involved in agriculture were sharecroppers, tilling others' land (Branda 1976).

After the stock market crash in October, 1929, the nation's economic outlook worsened. During the early 1930s, bread lines of unemployed individuals who had lost their life savings filled the streets of many cities and towns. The South especially was hard-hit by the Great Depression. Schools, black and white, suffered from the economic downturn. However, black schools experienced greater deprivation and suffered more from the inability to expand facilities (Newbold 1933, 5-15).

Prior to the Depression, white secondary education had enjoyed a groundswell as youth were encouraged to stay in school. Education was viewed as a means to prepare for

life as an adult and as a wage earner. During the Depression, the public viewed schools as the best solution to keeping adolescents off the streets and out of the labor market (Anderson 1988). As jobs became scarce during the early 1930s, black youth also were encouraged to stay in school. For many black youth, there was little else to do but to stay in school (Ashmore 1954). Increasing numbers of black high school students during the late 1920s and early 1930s necessitated more schools; thus, black secondary schools increased in number throughout Texas. In 1925, Texas had seven classified black high schools; by 1935 that number had risen to 53 (State Department of Education *Negro Education in Texas* 1926, *Negro Education in Texas* 1935). With a greater quantity of secondary schools available, the number of high school students rose quickly. Less than 13,000 black students attended high school in 1925, whereas almost 30,000 were enrolled in the fall of 1935. These students also attended school more regularly than had students in previous years. Black students recorded an average daily attendance rate of 60% in 1925. By 1935, this figure had jumped to 81%. The gap between the average daily attendance rate for white students and that of black students had narrowed from ten percentage points in 1925 to only five percentage points in 1935 (State Department of Education 1937).

With more students staying in school, the number of graduates from African-American high schools rose as well. More than 3,300 students graduated from Texas' black high schools in 1935 (State Department of Education 1937). This was a dramatic increase from the 700 which had graduated in 1925 (State Department of Education *Negro Education in Texas* 1931).

The state of Texas added twelfth grade to high schools beginning in the fall of 1938. Although the state recognized grades nine through twelve as the high school years, many schools did not make the change immediately. High schools continued to graduate

students after eleventh grade and consequently, few black or white students attended twelfth grade prior to 1940.

Table 1.5: Texas Scholastic Data 1920-1940

	Scholastic Population			Student Enrollment		
	State	% Black	% White	State	% Black	% White
<b>1920<sup>a</sup></b>	1,271,157	18.3	81.6	1,159,919	17.5	82.5
<b>1930<sup>b</sup></b>	1,564,488	16.6	83.4	1,308,028	15.6	84.4
<b>1940<sup>c</sup></b>	1,549,443	15.7	84.3	1,345,686	16.6	83.4

<sup>a</sup>(State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1922)

<sup>b</sup>(State Department of Education *The Twenty-Seventh Biennial Report* 1933)

<sup>c</sup>(State Department of Education 1940)

Table 1.6: Texas High School Enrollment 1920-1940

	State	Black	% Total	White	% Total
<b>1920<sup>a</sup></b>	126,696	6,200	4.9	120,496	95.1
<b>1930<sup>b</sup></b>	226,420	20,934	9.2	205,486	90.8
<b>1940<sup>c</sup></b>	245,845	23,565	9.6	222,280	90.4

<sup>a</sup>(State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1922)

<sup>b</sup>(State Department of Education *The Twenty-Seventh Biennial Report* 1933)

<sup>c</sup>(State Department of Education 1940)

Although the number of high schools and high school students increased during the 1930s, resources continued to be meted out in an inequitable manner. Expenditures for black schools increased during the late 1920s to accommodate for the growing number of black high schools. For the 1928-29 and 1929-30 school years, the state disbursed approximately 17% of its annual budget for black education. It is interesting to note, that despite the increased expenditures for building new schools, the value of black school property remained between five and six percent of the total value of the state's

school property valuation, leading one to believe that more white schools were constructed and/or that these facilities were of higher quality materials and stocked with more teaching resources than were black schools. Local board expenditures continued to favor white schools. Fairclough noted that although the black schools improved, the white schools improved more (2007).

### **CATALYSTS FOR IMPROVED BLACK EDUCATION**

During the 1920s, three major changes occurred in education for African-Americans in Texas: the advent of county training schools in rural areas, the classification and accreditation of black high schools, and the initiation of annual conferences focused on the needs of African-Americans in the state. The classification and accreditation process elevated the curriculum of black high schools in Texas. The rapid pace of accreditation of African-American high schools was due in large part to the efforts of the State Agent for Negro Education. The state agents dedicated time and effort to visit schools and improve educational opportunities by black youth. The annual Conference on Education for Negroes brought together black and white educational leaders to discuss the needs of black youth. These meetings focused greater attention on the needs of African-American education. Together, these three initiatives advanced African-American education in Texas beginning in the 1920s and laid the groundwork for later efforts to desegregate Texas' schools.

County training schools began in the South during the 1911-1912 school year and were designed to offer counties a centralized training school for blacks that provided two or three years of work beyond the common school. The goal of these institutions was to relate industrial training to the lives of students, with an emphasis on the farm and home and to prepare teachers for the county's black elementary schools (Redcay 1937, 38-53). Moral training, specifically the memorization and recitation of scripture, also was to be

emphasized (Trustees of the John F. Slater Fund 1917). The schools received a sum of \$500 each year for three years from the Slater Fund, a northern philanthropy, to assist the school in paying the salary of a black industrial or primary teacher. The General Education Board provided additional funds to erect buildings, purchase equipment, and pay teachers' salaries. Although the schools were run by local officials, the northern philanthropies attempted to modify the curriculum of the county training schools by reducing traditional subjects such as Latin and algebra in favor of "fundamental subjects" and vocational courses (State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1922, 155-156). The secondary course for county training schools included courses such as industries, homemaking, drawing, agriculture, health, geography, English, arithmetic, and music (Trustees of the John F. Slater Fund 1917). However, as many county training schools evolved into four year high schools, the course of study for these schools was revised.

In Texas, county training schools first operated during the 1919-1920 school year in six predominantly rural counties. Between 1919 and 1922, the Slater Fund and the General Education Board donated more than \$28,000 to the county training schools in Texas (State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1922). By 1920, 33 county training schools operated in the state, promoting vocational work. Unfortunately, the majority of teachers working in the county training schools did not hold degrees. The lack of teacher qualifications coupled with the lack of an academic curriculum resulted in poor quality schools. Although some county training schools later became academic high schools, many offered only rudimentary training for their students<sup>5</sup>. The growth of the county training schools mirrored the growth of vocational education, specifically agricultural and domestic arts education, that was prevalent throughout the white schools of the South (Morowski and Davis, Jr. 2005, 183-191).

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<sup>5</sup> By 1933, 45% of country training schools throughout the South had become accredited secondary schools (Knox 1940, 440-453).

A second influential event occurred during the 1920-1921 school year when the High School Division of the State Department of Education adopted the recommendations of the State Superintendent for classifying and accrediting high schools for blacks. The classification and accreditation process permitted students to enter college without taking entrance examinations. Although the State Department of Education had been classifying white high schools since 1916, not until 1921 were its standards adopted to classify and accredit black high schools (State Department of Education 1925). Schools were considered for classification when a district superintendent or board of trustees applied to the state. A state official visited the school and recommended accreditation within a given “class” depending on the state of the school. Classification was based primarily in physical standards of the school and the number of years of work offered. After a school had achieved classification it was eligible to apply for accreditation; accreditation was based on the quality of the work done in the school (State Department of Education *The Twenty-Eighth Biennial Report* 1935, 72). Initially, high schools were classified as first, second, or third class schools. First class high schools were held to the highest standards. To be accredited as a first class high school, black schools had to offer a four-year course of study, operate for ten months per year, employ a minimum of three teachers, of which at least half were degreed, and who earned an annual salary of \$700 each. Additionally, 16 units were required for graduation, daily class period were required to last at least 45 minutes, and no class could be larger than 40 pupils. Second and third class high schools offered fewer years of work, had fewer degreed teachers who in turn earned less in salary. The schools operated fewer months each year and had more class periods of shorter duration (State Department of Education *Negro Education in Texas* 1926). In short, second and third class high schools were of a lower quality than were first class high schools. The 1924 Directory of Classified and

Accredited High Schools listed no black schools as having been accredited. However, in 1925, seven black, four-year high schools were accredited, located mostly in urban areas, such as Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio. By 1927, 24 additional black high schools offering four-year courses of study were accredited. Four three-year high schools also were accredited (State Department of Education 1927). By 1930, a total of 46 high schools were included on the list of accredited black high schools in Texas (State Department of Education 1930).

In 1930, a third significant event which influenced African-American education in Texas occurred at Prairie View State College, the only state supported college for blacks. The first annual Conference on Education for Negroes in Texas was held in July. The Prairie View site likely was chosen for the event as accommodations were available for the black school men and women who traveled to the conference. Lodging in many towns and cities was open only to whites. This gathering brought together 138 black and white state school officials, county and city superintendents, principals of black high schools, presidents and deans of African-American colleges, representatives of philanthropic organizations, and citizens of Texas interested in the welfare of black Texans (Proceedings of the First Annual Session of the Conference on Education for Negroes in Texas 1930). Presentations included the dissemination of current state statistical data by the president of Prairie View State College and a discussion of the General Education Board's contribution to education for blacks in Texas by Leo Favrot (A General Education Board operative). Speeches on problems faced by black high school principals and the state of African-American higher education in Texas also were delivered. The one day event was significant as it brought together black and white civic and educational leaders to discuss the educational problems of blacks within the state. Although Texas had a firmly entrenched Jim Crow system, white leaders heard the concerns of black

educators and, although they tried to focus on the educational improvements blacks had attained, they were forced to address these larger issues. Although immediate improvements in black education were not forthcoming, black leaders recognized the value of maintaining an open dialogue with the white school men of the state. The state officials not only controlled purse strings, but also had the power to enact meaningful change. During this era, black leaders did not seek school desegregation; rather, they wanted a greater portion of the resources afforded to education in the state. In other words, they wanted the “equal” in the “separate but equal” doctrine first established by the *Plessy v Ferguson* Supreme Court decision in 1896.

Whereas the first conference on African-American education focused on the overall scope of black education in the state, the second conference, held in the spring of 1932, narrowed the meeting focus to the principals of high schools for blacks in the state. The program included not only state officials and black school administrators, but also a keynote address by Dr. J. H. Dillard, the chairman of the Jeanes and Slater Boards, a nationally prominent figure. (Proceedings of the Second Annual Conference on Education for Negroes in Texas 1931).

These annual conferences continued for several years, with each gathering focused on a specific aspect of black education (e.g. rural schools, vocational education, relationships between black businesses and education, and the socio-economic organization of the black home). In 1932, the name of the conference was changed from “Conference on Education for Negroes in Texas” to “The Third Educational Conference.” Although the conferences continued to focus on various aspects of black education each year, the name change was important. The new name highlighted the fact that black education was important and could not be considered an afterthought to the education of white students. By omitting the phrase “for Negroes in Texas,” the

conference leaders asserted their belief in the value and necessity of black education. The conferences continued to draw state school officials, as well as nationally prominent individuals. For example, W.E.B. DuBois addressed the economic conditions of African-Americans in Texas at the 1935 conference (Proceedings of the Sixth Educational Conference 1935). The first conference in 1930 drew a meager 138 attendees, but by the time of the final conference in 1941, attendance at the annual event had grown to approximately 1,500. Additionally, almost one quarter of the predominantly black attendees were engaged in occupations other than education (Proceedings of The Twelfth Educational Conference 1941). The level of black community participation demonstrated the high interest of citizens in addressing the needs of the black community and the conference provided a forum in which discussions on the needs of blacks could occur.

The overall impact of these conferences remains cloudy. Most of the information from the conferences was disseminated to the black teachers' association. Unclear is whether the issues discussed at the conferences reached a larger (white) audience. Likely they did not. However, the conferences were important for their role in addressing major black educational issues and for serving as a catalyst for other state gatherings of black educators. By the mid 1930s, annual meetings of a week or longer were conducted for Jeanes Supervisors; vocational teachers gathered to discuss the state of agricultural and home economics work in the state; college presidents and deans met to advance higher education; and state-wide curriculum conferences engaged teachers in discussion and additional training (State Department of Education 1937). These conferences allowed educators to share ideas and research with others in their field and unite their efforts to promote higher quality education for blacks in Texas.

## **1940-1965: TOWARD DESEGREGATION**

Between 1940 and 1965, the African-American population of Texas increased, but, as during previous decades, at a slower rate than the white population. Due to this more moderate growth, blacks represented a smaller percentage of the overall state population. The scholastic population and student enrollment figures mirrored the overall population trend for African-Americans in Texas. However, high school enrollment for black youth increased significantly between 1940 and 1965. Despite the increased high school enrollment, funding inequities persisted throughout the state. Local boards of education continued to favor schools for white students providing them with a disproportionately large share of available funds.

Another change observed during the 1950s and 1960s was an increased focus on desegregation in education. In 1947, the Presidential Committee on Civil Rights advanced the elimination of racial segregation. The integration of the military and numerous legal challenges by the NAACP served as catalysts to end segregation in educational settings. Following the *Brown v Board of Education of Topeka* decision in 1954, few Texas schools desegregated. Not until a State Court ruled in 1970 did local school districts comply with desegregation orders.

By 1940, the population of Texas had risen to more than six million, a 10% increase over the recorded population in 1930. As noted in Table 1.7, African-Americans accounted for 14.3% of the state's population, a slight decrease from 1930. Despite the fact that over 20,000 more blacks were living in Texas in 1940 than in 1930, their percentage of the population had decreased. Of the African-Americans in Texas in 1940, 55% lived in rural areas or in small towns (Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940 1942).

The 1940 Census indicated that school attendance patterns had changed since 1930. Students in rural areas attended school at rates similar to students in urban areas. Additionally, males attended school at a slightly higher rate than did females. In prior years, females attended school at a rate equal to or slightly greater than males (Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940 1942).

The enrollment of black students in Texas' schools had remained fairly constant between 1935 and 1940. The scholastic census for 1940 registered over 1.5 million children in the state of school age, of which 243,780, approximately 16%, were black. Of this group, 91%, or 222,733 students, were enrolled in Texas' schools. Black students attended school 78% of the time whereas white students attended 84% of the time. Although African-American students comprised 16% of the scholastic population, black schools continued to account for only 5% of the value of public school property in the state. High school enrollment increased dramatically during the 1930s. By 1940, more than 38,000 students were enrolled in Texas' black high schools, twice the number enrolled in 1932 (State Department of Education 1940). The number of graduates from black high schools more than doubled between 1930 and 1940. In 1940, more than 4,000 African-American youth graduated from high school in Texas, representing 8% of the overall high school graduates in the state (State Department of Education 1943).

For more than twenty years, the General Education Board funded the salaries and travel expenses of a State Agent and Associate State Agent for Negro Education. The state agent and his associate agent supervised the education for blacks in the state and handled all of the administrative paperwork created by the dual system of education in Texas. The agents regularly visited schools, evaluated academic programs, and administered the accreditation process. These black schoolmen in large part were responsible for the rapid pace of black school accreditation in Texas. In 1940, the General

Education Board terminated funding for the state agents in Texas.<sup>6</sup> The state superintendent understood the valuable contribution of these agents and feared that his own office would become overburdened with the additional workload if the agents' positions were terminated. The state superintendent petitioned the legislature to assume the funding for the state agents' salaries and travel expenses to allow them to continue their work. The legislature acquiesced and the State Agent and Associate State Agent of Negro Education continued to oversee the black schools of Texas (State Department of Education 1943).

Not surprisingly, scholastic census numbers declined throughout the early 1940s as a result of America's entry into World War II. Young men, both white and black, entered the military in large numbers after the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. School enrollments declined as well, reaching a nadir in 1945. Of the school age children in Texas, blacks enrolled in school at a greater percentage than did their white counterparts, highlighting the importance African-Americans placed on education. Although black youth enrolled in school more often, they attended slightly less frequently than did white students. In 1945, blacks recorded an average daily attendance rate of 79%, whereas whites posted an averaged daily attendance rate of 83% (State Department of Education 1943).

The high school enrollment for black students mirrored the overall school enrollment pattern. The lowest recorded high school enrollment occurred in 1945 for students of both races. The percentage of African-American youth attending high school remained flat as blacks accounted for 11% of the total high school enrollment. The percentage of African-American youth graduating from high school increased slightly

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<sup>6</sup> The GEB had ceased funding for white state supervisors in 1928, but continued support of black state agents for another 25 years (Davis 2004).

during the early 1940s. By 1945, blacks constituted more than nine percent of the high school graduates (State Department of Education 1947).

Between 1940 and 1950, the South experienced a massive redistribution of the African-American population. Many blacks left the rural South for the cities of the North. Others migrated from farms and rural areas to the cities of the South. More than one million blacks left the rural South between 1940 and 1950 (Ashmore 1954). As blacks left the South, the white population comprised an increasing percentage of the population. In 1940, 43.5% of the population of the United States was listed as rural (Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940 1942). By 1950, the rural population had decreased to only 36% of the nation's population. The urban areas of the country gained nearly twenty million people in only one decade, the largest increase since census records began in 1860 (Census of Population: 1950 1952).

Texas, unlike much of the Deep South, experienced a population increase between 1940 and 1950. Texas experienced a 20% increase in overall population. Like much of the country, urban areas in Texas grew more quickly, accounting for 62.7% of the population in 1950, a significant increase from 53.7% in 1940 (Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940 1942; Census of Population: 1950 1952).

Table 1.7: Texas Population Figures 1940-1960

	<b>Entire State</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
<b>1940<sup>a</sup></b>	6,414,824	960,276	14.3	5,487,544	85.5
<b>1950<sup>b</sup></b>	7,711,194	977,458	12.7	6,726,534	87.2
<b>1960<sup>c</sup></b>	9,579,677	1,187,125	12.4	8,374,831	87.4

<sup>a</sup>(Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940 1942)

<sup>b</sup>(Census of Population: 1950 1952)

<sup>c</sup>(Census of Population: 1950 1952)

Scholastic census records indicated that between 1945 and 1950, the number of African-American children of school age decreased by more than 9,000 students. However, the number of white children of school age increased by more than 85,000. Despite the decrease in overall black scholastic population, the percentage of black students enrolled in school increased. In 1945, 86% of black scholastics were enrolled in school, compared to only 70% of white scholastics (State Department of Education 1947). By 1950, 98% of white scholastics and 93% of black scholastics were enrolled in Texas schools (Texas Education Agency 1952).

Due to the large increase in the white scholastic population, blacks represented a smaller proportion of the enrolled student population. Conversely, the number of black students enrolled in high school increased not only in raw numbers, but also as a percentage of the overall high school population. In 1950, blacks represented 14% of the total school enrollment; ten years earlier, black students had represented less than 10% of the total school enrollment (State Department of Education 1940; Texas Education Agency 1952). As noted in Table 1.10, African-American students not only were enrolling in high school in greater numbers, but also were graduating at a higher rate. In 1945 blacks represented only 9.4% of all high school graduates, whereas in 1950, blacks accounted for 11.5% of high school graduates (State Department of Education 1947; Texas Education Agency 1952).

During this same period, the overall and high school average daily attendance rates for black and white students displayed an inverse relationship. The average daily attendance for white students decreased between 1945 and 1950, from 83% to 79%. The overall average daily attendance rate for black students increased from 78% in 1945 to 83% in 1950. The high school average daily attendance rate increased for white students

from 78% to 87%; for African-American students, average daily attendance remained constant at 84% (State Department of Education 1947; Texas Education Agency 1952).

Funding inequities persisted. In 1940, black school property comprised 5.5% of the state's total school property values. Between 1940 and 1945 the situation changed little. Robinson noted that throughout the South, the resources for meeting the needs of black high school teachers was extremely limited (1944, 145-158). By 1950, the value of black school property had risen to 7% of the state's total value of school property. As African-American students comprised over 15% of the state's enrolled student population during the decade of the 1940s, they did not share equally in financial resources.

Table 1.8: Texas Scholastic Data 1940-1960

	Scholastic Population			Student Enrollment		
	State	% Black	% White	State	% Black	% White
<b>1940<sup>a</sup></b>	1,549,443	15.7	84.3	1,345,686	16.6	83.4
<b>1950<sup>b</sup></b>	1,566,610	14.1	85.9	1,526,741	13.9	86.1
<b>1960<sup>c</sup></b>	2,168,560	13.5	86.5	2,046,076	13.6	86.4

<sup>a</sup>(State Department of Education 1940)

<sup>b</sup>(Texas Education Agency 1952)

<sup>c</sup>(Texas Education Agency 1961)

Table 1.9: Texas High School Enrollment 1940-1960

	State	Black	% Total	White	% Total
<b>1940<sup>a</sup></b>	245,845	23,565	9.6	222,280	90.4
<b>1950<sup>b</sup></b>	286,839	37,097	12.9	249,742	87.1
<b>1960<sup>c</sup></b>	453,606	57,198	12.6	396,408	87.4

<sup>a</sup>(State Department of Education 1940)

<sup>b</sup>(Texas Education Agency 1952)

<sup>c</sup>(Texas Education Agency 1961)

In 1947, the Presidential Committee on Civil Rights recommended the elimination of segregation based on race, color, creed, or national origin. Additionally, by 1950, the military was integrated and blacks had regained the right to the franchise (Ashmore 1954). These changes in the racial status of blacks in American society created a call for the end of segregation in education. The NAACP provided a catalyst for legal challenges to end segregation first at the university level, then throughout the American educational system. The decades of the 1950s and 1960s were fractious and resulted in riots throughout the United States. When the Supreme Court handed down the *Brown* decision in May, 1954, they ruled that segregated education inherently was unequal. A subsequent decision the following year, known as *Brown II*, required school districts to desegregate with all due speed. Desegregation efforts throughout the South were met with local resistance and, in some cases, required state leaders to utilize the National Guard to assure desegregation and protect the safety of students.

In Texas, some districts flatly refused to desegregate the schools. Others simply ignored the ruling. Many school districts appointed committees to study the desegregation issue, but failed to enact any change. Desegregation in Texas happened slowly and in some cases, not at all until the 1970s. Legal challenges provided the impetus for the Court ruling in 1970 that mandated all school districts in Texas desegregate their schools. Throughout the South, school districts lost lawsuits aimed at challenging desegregation efforts. In time, superintendents and boards of trustees understood the legal implications of failing to abide by the Court's decision and reluctantly desegregated schools.

Little changed for black students in Texas between 1950 and 1955. The scholastic population increased slightly for white and black students. Blacks comprised 13% - 15% of the scholastic population and of the enrolled student population. Black high schools

educated approximately 13% of the total high school population and produced 11% of the state's high school graduates. Black students enrolled in and attended school only slightly less frequently than did white students. State records indicate that the spending gap between the education of white and black students closed slightly during this period. For the 1954-1955 school year, 13% of the net amount dispersed for public school went to schools for African-American students. For the first time, the proportion of money spent on black education mirrored the proportion of black students in the state's public schools (Texas Education Agency 1952, *Annual Statistical Report 1954-55* 1955).

Table 1.10: High School Graduates 1915-1960

	<b>State</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>% Total</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>% Total</b>
<b>1915<sup>a</sup></b>	7,704	528	6.8	7,176	93.2
<b>1921<sup>b</sup></b>	13,068	653	5.0	12,415	95.0
<b>1930<sup>c</sup></b>	30,863	2,061	6.7	28,802	93.3
<b>1940<sup>d</sup></b>	55,033	4,227	7.7	50,806	92.3
<b>1950<sup>e</sup></b>	49,358	5,695	11.5	43,663	88.5
<b>1960<sup>f</sup></b>	76,500	9,196	12.0	67,304	88.0

<sup>a</sup>(State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1917)

<sup>b</sup>(State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1922)

<sup>c</sup>(State Department of Education *The Twenty-Seventh Biennial Report* 1933)

<sup>d</sup>(State Department of Education 1940)

<sup>e</sup>(Texas Education Agency 1952)

<sup>f</sup>(Texas Education Agency 1961)

By 1960, the population of Texas exceeded nine million people. As the population increased, demographic patterns changed. Following World War II, a variety of occupations became open to blacks and a majority of black Texans left agriculture as a profession. In 1960, only eight percent of the state's African-Americans were involved in

agriculture, a stark change from 1930 when nearly half of working blacks were engaged in agriculture (Branda 1976).

Continuing a trend begun in earlier decades, the African-American population increased at a slower rate than did the white population, again reducing blacks as a percentage of the state's overall population (Census of Population: 1960 1961). Of the black population, more than two million African-American children were of school age. African-American children continued to constitute about 13% of Texas' school age population. Ninety-six percent of these children were enrolled in school, compared to 99% of white children. Although African-American children were enrolled at a slightly lower rate, they attended school more frequently, especially in the high school grades. Black high school students posted an average daily attendance rate of 84%, whereas white high school students attended 78% of the time. Black high schools enrolled 12% of the total high school population of the state and produced 12% of the high school graduates (Texas Education Agency 1961). By 1960, the state of Texas no longer disaggregated school expenditures or property values according to race.

During the period of the early 1960s, the population of Texas continued to grow slowly. The educational landscape for African-American youth in Texas remained largely unchanged. Blacks comprised nearly 14% of the scholastic population and of the total students enrolled in Texas' public schools. African-American and white children posted equivalent average daily attendance rates as well. At the high school level, African-American high schools educated 11% of the state's youth and produced a comparable percentage of the state's high school graduates. Black high school students attended school only slightly less than their white counterparts. As desegregation efforts continued throughout the state, many black youth were absorbed into the white school systems.

Blacks enrolled in and graduated from high school in increasing numbers between 1940 and 1965, despite the overall decline of blacks as a percentage of the scholastic population in Texas. Although the African-American high school population grew significantly, black schools received an inequitable share of state funds. Efforts to desegregate Texas' schools increased during the late 1950s and 1960s, but largely were ignored by local school boards throughout the state. Not until a state court took control of the state's desegregation efforts did local school districts comply with the court's orders.

## **Summary and Conclusions**

Beginning in the late 1800s, the state of Texas provided some type of formal schooling for African-American youth, who constituted nearly one quarter of the state's scholastic population. Although these children comprised a sizeable portion of the state's student population, they received a paltry share of the state's educational resources. This dearth of resources resulted in low salaries for teachers, poor quality facilities, and a lack of teaching materials. The state of Texas annually disbursed funds to districts based on the number of children enrolled in a given district, regardless of the students' race. The local superintendents and boards of trustees were left to determine expenditures at the local level, which resulted in the majority of funds being utilized for the education of white students. African-American parents banded together and collectively requested additional funds or supplies from districts, but often were denied. These parents then were forced to supplement the financial and physical resources provided by school districts to provide a meaningful education for their students. This inequitable funding pattern remained intact until schools were desegregated, in many cases not until the 1970s.

Although the population of Texas increased, the white population grew more quickly than did that of African-Americans; therefore, blacks represented an increasingly smaller proportion of the state's population. This decline in black population eroded African-Americans' ability to demand equitable resources. Although the federal courts mandated desegregation, black youth in Texas were denied an education equal to that provided for white students.

The classification and accreditation of black high schools in Texas began during the 1920s. Initially, schools were classified according to criteria which included the number of teachers in the school, teachers' salaries, the length of class periods, and the credits required for graduation. The schools then were evaluated on the quality of their academic programs to attain accreditation (State Department of Education *Negro Education in Texas* 1926). Unlike white high schools which were granted accreditation on a course by course basis, black high schools were accredited as a unit (State Department of Education *The Twenty-Seventh Biennial Report* 1933). Once a high school gained accreditation, all courses in the school were considered accredited. This method of accreditation allowed schools to gain accredited status more quickly.

The rapid pace at which black high schools were accredited in Texas was due in large part to the efforts of the State Agent for Negro Education and his assistant. Not only did these individuals visit schools and assist them with accreditation, they also helped organize annual conferences on black education, interacted with northern philanthropies, and promoted schooling for African-American students.

An examination of one small town Texas school district illustrates the difficulties faced by African-Americans seeking a quality education for their youth. The town of Gonzales, Texas, provides an example of the demographic patterns and fiscal inequities evident at the state level. The following chapter relates the story of this central Texas

town and the history of an African-American school from its beginnings as an elementary school in the late 1800s until its closure due to desegregation of the town's high schools in 1965.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Unequal Playing Fields: African-American Education in Gonzales, Texas**



Illustration 2.1: Classroom Door in Edwards High School, Gonzales, Texas 2006

Gonzales, Texas, is a small town located in the central portion of the state and is the county seat of Gonzales County. The town is surrounded by farmland and is one of only a few towns in the county. The population of Gonzales reached its pinnacle in the early twentieth century and then declined slowly for several years (Vollentine County History 1986). The area is noted for its role in the struggle for Texas independence and for its agricultural and poultry industries.

The African-American scholastic population of Gonzales increased between 1880 and 1960, but generally at a slower rate than did the white scholastic population. From 1880 through 1940, black student enrollment in Gonzales' schools increased steadily, albeit slowly. Between 1940 and 1960, African-American school enrollment increased

significantly. The first record of African-American schooling in Gonzales dates to a newspaper article printed in the *Gonzales Inquirer* from the late 1870s announcing the completion of a “colored school” (1878, 2). This school was the origin of what later became the Edwards School, named for one of the school’s beloved principals.

The Gonzales Independent School District (ISD) was formed in 1906 and officially recognized by the State Department of Education in 1913 (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 4). During the nearly 60 years that the Edwards School operated in Gonzales ISD, the board of trustees provided the institution with an inequitable share of the district’s resources. Although the district received state funds based on student enrollment regardless of race, the local school board disbursed the funds to the schools as it saw fit. Many times the parents of Edwards High students petitioned the school board for new facilities or school equipment, only to be turned away. On some occasions, parents raised the funds needed to procure equipment and supplies (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965). The schools’ textbooks were castoffs from Gonzales High and often were in poor condition (Oral History Interview with Wray Hood 2006; Oral History Interview with Winston Fryer 2006; Oral History Interview with Ella Harris 2007). Despite the paltry share of district resources that Edwards High received, the school thrived and provided an education for generations of African-Americans in and around Gonzales.

### **Antebellum Gonzales**

Gonzales, Texas, lies at the confluence of the Guadalupe and San Marcos rivers in central Texas (Hardin *Gonzales, Texas*). The town is approximately one hour south of the state capital of Austin and one hour east of the city of San Antonio. Gonzales lies in

central Texas, the heart of intercultural tensions between east Texas, with cultural and historical roots in the antebellum South and west Texas, an area associated with Mexican and borderlands history. The area forms a diamond shape from Dallas to San Antonio to Corpus Christi to Houston back to Dallas (Foley 1997).

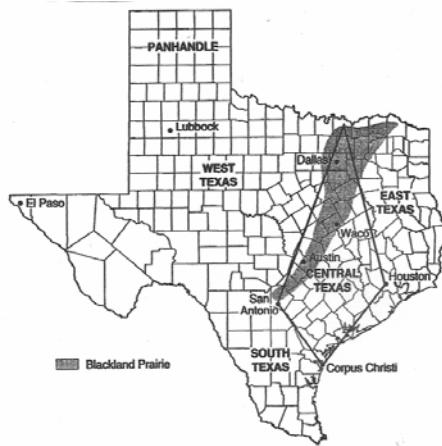


Illustration 2.2: Zone of Central Texas Cotton Culture (From Foley, Neil. 1997. *White Scourge*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 16.)

The area first was surveyed by James Kerr in 1825 and became the capital of DeWitt's colony.<sup>7</sup> The settlement was named for the governor of Coahuila and Texas, Rafael Gonzales. Abandoned the following year due to Indian attacks, Gonzales was resettled in 1832 and was granted 16 leagues of land for development (Baumgartner and Vollentine). As a northern territory of Mexico, Texas was under the protection of the Mexican army which provided the settlers of Gonzales with a small cannon for protection from Indian attacks in 1831. When the town's citizens refused to surrender the cannon to the army in 1835, the military commander of Texas sent Francisco de Castañeda and 100 dragoons to retrieve it. The troops arrived at the Guadalupe River in October, 1835, and

<sup>7</sup> Empresario Green C. DeWitt was granted a petition by the Mexican government to establish a colony in Texas in 1825 (Baumgartner and Vollentine).

were met by 18 militiamen from Gonzales who informed the Mexican commander that if wanted the cannon he could “Come and take it.” With the arrival of Texas volunteers from the surrounding countryside, a battle with the Mexican army ensued. Castañeda was forced to withdraw to San Antonio, ending the Battle of Gonzales, the first battle of the Texas Revolution (Hardin *Battle of Gonzales*).

Subsequently, Stephen F. Austin traveled to Gonzales and was named the first commander in chief of the new revolutionary army. Austin and 32 men from Gonzales (the Immortal 32) answered the call to defend the Alamo in San Antonio against Santa Anna and the Mexican forces.<sup>8</sup> The outnumbered Texans were unable to hold the Alamo. When General Sam Houston learned of the fall of the Alamo, he feared the Mexican army would move to subdue the town of Gonzales. He ordered the townspeople to retreat from Gonzales and a torch be put to the town. This famous incident in Texas history became known as the Runaway Scrape (Baumgartner and Vollentine).

The newly formed Republic of Texas formally established Gonzales County on December 14, 1837 (Vollentine County History 1986). Initially, the county was sparsely populated, but due to fertile soil and an abundant water supply the number of settlers in the area grew quickly. In 1860, Gonzales had a population of 8,059, including 3,168 slaves (Baumgartner and Vollentine). Nevertheless, the main sources of income in the county were farming and livestock raising (Vollentine County History 1986). Crops such as cotton, corn, and fruit such as peaches, plums, and pears were the chief agricultural products of the county. After the Civil War, the cattle and hog industries became mainstays of the county’s agriculture. By the 1890s, a poultry industry was firmly established. All of the county’s agricultural products were shipped to Indianola,

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<sup>8</sup> At the Alamo in San Antonio, outnumbered Texas revolutionaries held off Santa Anna and his army for several days before being overrun. The Texan’s refused to surrender and all men in the Alamo were killed. “Remember the Alamo” became a rallying cry throughout the war for independence from Mexico.

approximately 100 miles away, as no railroads served the Gonzales area (Baumgartner and Vollentine). In 1881, the Gonzales Branch Railroad Company was chartered and commenced construction of a 12 mile stretch of track that connected Gonzales to Harwood, a nearby town with rail connections to the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railway (Young 2008). The rail line provided easy access to Gonzales and aided in the town's growth.

In 1845, Texas joined the Union as a slave holding state and the residents' attitudes concerning blacks were typical of those found throughout the South. During the mid 1800s the local newspaper, *Gonzales Inquirer*, published accounts that reflected the status of blacks as property. Stories of runaway slaves, of slave revolts such as that of New Orleans, and slave sales were commonplace. In one account of slaves being sold at an estate sale, the newspaper reported:

...The *thirteen and a half cents*, we suppose, was given for the *eight babies*: they certainly are worth but little more, after deducting the expense for feeding, clothing, physic and the services of one hand for *thrashing* (Hire of Negroes 1854, 2).<sup>9</sup>

Residents of Gonzales valued education for their youth. As early as 1851, Gonzales boasted the establishment of Gonzales College, the first institution in Texas to grant bachelor's degrees to women. In 1853, a letter published in the *Gonzales Inquirer* called for a "good system of public schools" to be established in Texas (Public Schools 1853, 1). Although the Constitution of 1845 provided for a common school systems in Texas, not until November, 1853, did the legislature consider a resolution to establish a system of free, common schools throughout the state (State Legislature 1853, 2).

The Constitution of 1866 established a system of free schools throughout the state for white scholastics only. Blacks were to be assessed a separate tax for the support of

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<sup>9</sup> Italics are as they appear in the original article.

their schools. The newly freed slaves desired an education despite the lack of state or local financial support. As Anderson highlighted, education was an expression of freedom; the new freedmen wanted to put distance between themselves and bondage (1988). Throughout the South, including Gonzales and other Texas communities, blacks established a tradition of educational self-help to support their schools. This initiative endured well after the *Brown v Board of Education of Topeka* decision in the 1950s.

During August, 1878, excitement filled the African-American community of Gonzales; the *Gonzales Inquirer* reported that the construction of a school for the town's "colored" youth was almost complete. The paper noted that the school's teacher and solicitation committee were inviting the community to a supper and concert to be held at the school house to raise funds to supply school property (1878, 2). The following week, the paper reported that the supper had been a great success. Many white, as well as African-American, members of the community attended the event and enjoyed the food, concert, recitations, declamations, and debates. Several of Gonzales' leading white citizens spoke and encouraged the black community to continue its educational efforts. The school's new teacher, J.W.M. Abernathy, received generous praise. However, James Ramsay, a prominent white speaker, reminded the attendees that the building was due in large part to white generosity and that the African-American community now was responsible for furnishing the building with "the necessary school furniture, charts, maps, etc." (Colored People's Festival 1878, 3).

The new school building was 20 feet by 30 feet and was built at a cost of \$380.55, of which \$315 was supplied from the public school funds, \$63.05 was supplied by white members of the community, and \$2.50 was supplied by the African-American community. The funds raised by the supper were used to supply the new school and to build an addition to the schoolhouse which would serve as a residence for school's

teacher. This was in order that he might guard the structure since two previous school buildings had been destroyed by fire during the previous two years (Colored People's Festival 1878, 3). The mention of two previous schoolhouses indicates that Gonzales provided some type of schooling for African-American students as early as 1876. No mention is made of the number of students attending the new school, nor was any information located regarding the school's curriculum. Although 679 black children resided in Gonzales County during the 1878-1879 school year, the number of students who attended the newly completed school remains unknown (Vollentine Gonzales County Schools 1986).

Gonzales County was, and is, largely rural. The town of Gonzales was prominent in the early history of Texas for its role in the settlers' rebellion and subsequent independence from Mexico. The residents of the Gonzales area supported a thriving agricultural industry and a rail line provided the residents a means for transporting crops and livestock. During the late 1800s and early 1900s, the population of Gonzales grew, causing an increase in the school enrollments. Although Gonzales County followed the mandates of the Constitution of 1876 and provided schooling for white and black youth, the resources provided for the education of African-American youth were far less than to those provided to white students.

## **1880-1920: The Early Years**

The 1880 Census of the United States recorded 14,480 people living in Gonzales, but did not disaggregate the data according to race (Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census 1880). Local records place the African-American population in excess of 5,000 in 1880 (Vollentine County History 1986). Because of a

fire in the Gonzales County courthouse in 1893, several years of scholastic census records were destroyed (Vollentine County History 1986).

Prior to 1880, no records are available for student enrollment or teacher employment. The only surviving records of town's school for black youth are newspaper articles from the local newspaper, *Gonzales Inquirer*. Not until 1889 do existing records again note the status of African-American education in the town of Gonzales. These records often are contradictory with two or more reports for the same time period reporting slightly different data (Gonzales School Fund 1886; Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965). Although fragmentary, the existing records reveal several trends. First, growth in student enrollment was reasonable. Second, seasonal attendance variations followed farming cycles and were typical of those seen throughout the South. Also, black students attended school at slightly lower rates than did whites. Finally, corporal punishment was utilized significantly more often in schools for black students (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965).

In the town of Gonzales, white students were provided longer school terms, as well as the opportunity for a secondary education; black students were provided only with the elementary grades. Unlike the school for white students in the town of Gonzales, the county schools often were one room schoolhouses for black and white students. The county school system also distributed funds to schools without regard to race. This practice was common during the early years of the public school movement (Bullock 1967).

Originally, the county schools were administered by the Gonzales County Board of School Directors and the commissioner's court. In 1906 an election was held and H.W. Haynes won appointment as the first county superintendent at an annual salary of \$1,500. He was replaced in 1908 by A.B. Corder (Vollentine Gonzales County Schools 1986).

By 1880, 679 of the 2,068 scholastics registered in Gonzales County were listed as “colored” and lived in 23 different communities. The African-American students were taught by a cadre of 12 male teachers and one female teacher. The average daily attendance for black students was only 43%, compared to 53% of white children who attended school daily (County School Matters 1880, 2). Since the county was comprised predominantly of farms, this low attendance level is not surprising. Students were needed to harvest crops in the fall and to aid the family with planting in the spring (Long 1932). “Many black parents simply found it impossible to dispense with the labor of their school-age children” (Litwack 1998, 57). Additionally, transportation to schools often was impeded when the weather was inclement and the road and paths were impassable; thus, children remained at home.

The first record of school attendance for black students in the town of Gonzales occurred in 1889. The *Gonzales Inquirer* reported that 26 black students were enrolled during the month of October. The newspaper noted that 99 white students were enrolled in September, with 81 being enrolled during October. Whereas the white students had a 96% attendance record, the African-American students regularly attended 83% of the time. Education for white students extended through the tenth grade, whereas the education provided for black students only went through the fourth grade, a common occurrence in the South (Report of the Gonzales public schools for the month ending October 25, 1889, 3). The lack of information reported on the schools for black children in Gonzales was not surprising given the white attitudes toward educating African-American children which were prevalent during Reconstruction in the American South. Anderson noted that planters and small farmers alike opposed black education and diverted the majority of available resources to white children (Anderson 1988).

Although only 26 African-American students were enrolled in the Gonzales Colored School in October, 1889, the number swelled to 45 by the first of December. During December, average daily attendance for white students was 91% and for black students 85.4% (Gonzales City School Report for December 1889 1890, 3). These numbers highlight the fact that when students were not needed on the farm, they attended school more regularly. However, by the end of January, 1890, black students accounted for more than 27% of the town's total school enrollment, with 89 students enrolled in school. For this same time period, the town's white school enrolled 243 students. Black and white students had an identical average daily attendance rate of 89% (Gonzales City School Report for January 1890). The final attendance report for the 1889-1890 school year, published in the *Gonzales Inquirer* in June, 1890, noted only the statistics for white students but made no mention of the students attending the "colored" school. The enrollment and attendance figures support several scholars' understanding of the importance of education within the African-American community (e.g. Bullock 1967, Anderson 1988). Further, Fairclough noted that in addition to many parents, black teachers shared the belief that "education would liberate the black masses from ignorance, degradation, and poverty" (2007, 7).

In 1891, a fifth grade was added to the Gonzales Colored School and a total of 117 students were enrolled. Black students comprised 25.6% of the total enrolled population of the town's schools (City of Gonzales Public Schools Report for January 1891, 3). Statewide, blacks represented 24% of the enrolled student population. The 77% average daily attendance rate posted by African-American students in Gonzales continued to lag behind that of the students in the town's white school (85%), but far exceeded the state average of 58% for black students (State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1893).

By 1892, the schools of Gonzales operated separately from the county. That year the white schools offered grades one through ten, but the black school continued to offer only grades one through five. The town's 120 African-American students were taught by three teachers and their school term typically lasted eight months ending in April. Parents who were able to afford tuition, paid for a ninth month of school (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 2).

The county's annual report for the 1896-1897 school year noted that 145 black students were enrolled in school and were taught by a principal and three assistants (*Gonzales City Schools Annual Report for the Year 1896-1897*). The school superintendent, T.L. Tollard remarked, "The colored school shows a marked improvement in enrollment and attendance above former years. The school is in good condition and they are doing good work" (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 2). At the end of the nineteenth century, the Gonzales Colored School enrolled 206 students, a 31% increase since 1889. African-American students represented slightly more than 25% of the total enrollment in Gonzales' schools, a figure marginally higher than the 21% of black students enrolled statewide. The facilities offered the black youth of Gonzales were inferior to those offered to white students. Whereas the white students had a new brick high school with a library, black students had only a frame building that was 20 feet by 30 feet and did not include a library.

Between 1889 and 1892, the white school reported only two cases of corporal punishment and by 1896, corporal punishment was outlawed in the white school (*Gonzales City Schools Annual Report for the Year 1896-1897*) Comparatively, the school for black students reported more than 100 instances of corporal punishment (City of Gonzales Public Schools Report for January 1891, 3; Report of the Gonzales public

schools for the month ending October 25, 1889). Again, during the 1902-1903 school year, the district reported 52 cases of corporal punishment at the school for African-American students (*Thirteenth Annual Report: Gonzales City Schools Session 1901-02* 1902). Although these numbers may seem shocking today, corporal punishment was common in black schools of this era and the practice was entrenched more deeply in the South. Teachers relied on corporal punishment to encourage studying and good behavior. Many students, such as William Pickens of North Carolina and the famous author, Richard Wright, recalled being subjected to corporal punishment in school. Most parents approved of corporal punishment and administered it at home to their children (Fairclough 2007). Fairclough further noted that although black schools practiced corporal punishment more than did white schools, white schools suspended students more frequently. Interestingly, Gonzales reported instances of corporal punishment, but provided no records on student suspensions.

After the turn of the century the school for African-Americans in Gonzales, as elsewhere in the American South, continued to operate in poor facilities, received inequitable funding for teaching resources, and had lower paid teachers than did their white counterparts.

No matter how it was measured-by the quality of the facilities, the length of the school term, financial appropriations, student-teacher ratio, curriculum, teachers' preparation and salaries-the education available to black children in the New South was vastly inferior to that available to white students. At least twice as much was spent on white students as on black students, and in many state the ratio was far more lopsided (Litwack 1998, 107).

White residents in Gonzales likely shared the attitudes and beliefs of most white Southerners at the turn of the century. They believed that "the type of education Negroes needed was less complex and less expensive than that needed by whites" (Bullock 1967, 87). This belief provided a convenient excuse for discrimination in the distribution of

educational funds by local school boards. Because Jim Crow laws segregated blacks in all areas of daily life, black schools suffered from a lack of resources. The school for black students in Gonzales was far from equal to its white counterpart, but it provided an education for its students.

In 1900, Gonzales had a population of 28,892, an increase of more than 10,000 people during the previous decade (Bulletins of the Twelfth Census of the United States 1901). The scholastic census for 1900 for the Gonzales Independent School District recorded 504 white and 212 black youth. Black students represented 30% of the scholastic population of the district, whereas blacks constituted only 22% of the statewide scholastic population. Although black youth constituted 30% of Gonzales' total scholastic population, the total value of school property in the black school was just one tenth of that found in the white schools. The State Superintendent's biennial report for 1900-1901 listed the property of the Gonzales' white school to be valued at \$30,000 compared to only a valuation of only \$3,000 for the "colored" school. Additionally, the school for blacks had no library, whereas the value of the library at the white school was placed at \$2,000 (State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1902).

The thirteenth annual report of the Gonzales city schools for 1902-1903 noted that 209 black students were enrolled in school and had an average daily attendance rate of 80%. The school term had been extended to nine months for both black and white students. The superintendent's report contained a lengthy narrative on the white schools, but failed to discuss the school for black students. Although the town provided limited schooling for African-American students, it obviously considered their needs secondary to those of white students (*Thirteenth Annual Report: Gonzales City Schools Session 1901-02* 1902).

In February, 1906, the school board voted to create an independent school district. At this same meeting, J.W. Bunston was named principal of the black school and two additional teachers for the school were elected. Not until August 19, 1913, did Senate Bill 57 recognize the Gonzales Independent School District as an entity separate from the other schools in the county. During that same year (1913), the school for African-American students added two additional teachers, bringing the total to five, to instruct the growing student population. The school had outgrown the original 30 x 20 square foot building and rented space in the Knights of Peter Claver Hall to house the increasing number of students (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965).<sup>10</sup>

The town of Gonzales had 3,139 residents in 1910, a decrease of more than 1000 people since 1900. Blacks comprised 24% of the overall population, but only 14% of school age population. Although the United States Census recorded only 150 black youth of school age in Gonzales, the local scholastic census recorded 299 black youth. The local scholastic census figures were determined by census enumerators canvassing the town's neighborhoods and likely were more accurate. The local survey also noted 632 white youth, compared to only 463 listed in the national census (Gonzales County 1932; Thirteenth Census of the United States: Population 1910).

During the 1909-1910 school year, 475 white youth and 200 black pupils were enrolled in schools in the town of Gonzales. The school for African-American students still had no library, despite the fact that the white school purchased an additional 100 volumes for the library, raising their total volumes of 1,400. Additionally, the school for black students had no value listed for teaching equipment, compared to apparatus worth more than \$600 at the white schools. The biennial report for 1909-1910 noted that the

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<sup>10</sup> The Knights of Peter Claver is a Catholic lay organization for African-American males, founded in 1909 in Mobile, Alabama (Knights of Peter Claver 2007).

white school had four elementary and four high school grades. The African-American school had only three elementary and four high school grades. By 1910, the town supported four schools for white students, three of which were of wood construction and one was constructed of brick. One school was listed to be in good condition, likely the brick building. One school building was listed to be in fair condition and the three remaining buildings were considered to be in bad condition. The district supported only one school for black children which was made of wood and in fair condition (State Department of Education 1911).<sup>11</sup>

Table 2.1: Gonzales Independent School District Data 1890-1910

	Scholastic Census Data					Enrollment Data				
	Total	White	%Tot	Black	%Tot	Total	White	%Tot	Black	%Tot
<b>1890<sup>a</sup></b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	332	243	73.2	89	26.8
<b>1900<sup>b</sup></b>	716	504	70.0	212	30	678	469	69.2	209	30.1
<b>1910<sup>c</sup></b>	931	632	67.8	299	32.1	675	475	72.3	200	29.6

<sup>a</sup>(State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1893)

<sup>b</sup>(State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1902)

<sup>c</sup>(State Department of Education 1911)

In 1914, J.G. Horace was elected principal of the African-American school for the following year at the same salary which Bunston had received for the previous eight years. Two years later, J.O. Desmuth was elected to replace Horace for the following school year, along with four teachers. Desmuth served only one year as principal and in May, 1917, W.J. Porter was named the new principal for the ensuing school year. He received the same salary that J.W. Bunston had received in 1906, eleven years earlier (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 5).

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<sup>11</sup> Likely this was the original 20 x 30 square foot building.

The black school could no longer operate in the Knights of Peter Claver Hall due to the large number of students enrolled. A new facility was needed and in August, 1916, the Gonzales ISD school board passed a motion for a new school building for black youth. Three years later when the school board had failed to take further action to secure the new facility, the parents of black students asked for a special meeting with the board during February, 1919. The parents were anxious to have a new school building and offered to donate \$1,100 to initiate a fund for the facility. The board rebuffed the parents stating that a bond issue was required to build and equip a new school. In March, 1919, the school board secured lot number one in range 14 east of Water Street in the outer town of Gonzales from Mr. Henry Norwood for the sum of \$200. The lot extended 50 feet along the street and 150 feet perpendicular to the street. In May, the financial committee recommended the purchased site be used for a building “adequate for the needs of a Negro school” and proposed that the city float bonds on the school district to finance the new facility (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 5).

Following the recommendation of the finance committee, the board called a bond election for August, 1919, which passed by a margin of 196 votes in favor to 93 votes opposed. For the 1919-1920 school year, the board agreed to continue renting space from the Knights of Peter Claver and to close the openings between the rooms, as well as to provide desks and chairs for the students. In May, 1920, Edward Johnson became the first black student to pass the examinations for high school graduation. This same year, 20 students graduated from Gonzales High School, the school for white students (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 5).

The overall population in Gonzales County declined between 1900 and 1920, but the rural population increased slightly. More African-Americans turned to agriculture as

individuals “were pushed out of more desirable jobs which they had succeeded in invading during the manpower shortage of the war years” (Woodward 2002, 115). Many of the jobs available to blacks during World War I had been in trades and crafts. The town of Gonzales, like the county, registered a smaller population in 1920 than in 1910. Between 1910 and 1920, the town of Gonzales declined in population by more than 25% (Department of Commerce 1920).

The scholastic population of Gonzales grew slowly between 1880 and 1920, but the number of students enrolled remained relatively flat after the turn of the century. Black students were subject to corporal punishment more often than were white students. Although Gonzales ISD provided fewer resources for the education of black youth, the “colored” school continued to operate. African-American parents in Gonzales valued education for their children and were willing to make sacrifices to provide facilities and supplies.

The need for improved materials and facilities began during the early 1900s, but did not end by 1920. This inequity in educational resources continued throughout the life of Edwards High School. During the ensuing 20 years, the disparity of resources between white and black schools would become even more pronounced.

## **1920-1940: The Interwar Years**

The African-American scholastic population of Gonzales grew between 1920 and 1940, but school enrollment numbers changed little. Additionally, the white scholastic population of the town increased at a faster rate than did that of African-Americans, diluting their percentage of the overall student population. The school for blacks continued to receive a disproportionately low share of district financial resources for facilities, equipment, and teaching materials.

As the nation entered the Great Depression, Gonzales, like much of the nation, reduced teacher salaries and cut expenditures. The Edwards School suffered from these cuts more than did the white schools in town. Teachers' salaries did not return to pre-Depression levels for many years. As the economy waned, Edwards became more than just a school for youth; evening classes for adults offered training in a variety of areas. Edwards became a focal point in the black community of Gonzales.

Residents of Texas, a former slave-holding state, possessed attitudes congruent with those of whites throughout the Deep South. Many Texas whites viewed blacks as inferior and strongly supported the Jim Crow laws which perpetuated segregation. Racial tensions were high throughout the early 1920s in Texas. The *Gonzales Inquirer* published numerous articles recounting racial incidents throughout Texas, such as attacks on white individuals perpetrated by blacks and several accounts of lynching. The greatest amount of lynching in Texas occurred between 1918 and 1925 and had subsided greatly by the time of the Great Depression (Sitton and Conrad 2005).

Throughout the early 1920s, the scholastic population decreased slightly. During the 1924-1925 school year, Gonzales ISD noted a scholastic population of 1,471 students, with 389 (26%) being black (State Department of Education *The Twenty-Fourth Biennial Report* 1926). As the nation edged toward the Great Depression, African-Americans suffered disproportionately.

In May, 1921, the Gonzales ISD superintendent raised graduation requirements; white students were required to earn 16 credits to graduate, whereas the African-American students only needed to earn 12 credits for graduation. Despite the inequitable standards, seven students graduated from the Edwards School in 1921, several of whom returned to teach in the school after earning their teaching credentials (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 5).

George Edwards was elected principal of the black school and by 1924 received an annual salary of \$850. The principal at the “Mexican” school received \$1,000 and the principal of the Gonzales High School was paid \$2,000. Similarly, black teachers’ salaries lagged behind those of the teachers at the Mexican and white schools. In May, 1925, a new black teacher was hired for \$50 per month, whereas a white teacher was hired for \$75 per month (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 5). This pattern was consistent with the pay discrepancies throughout the state of Texas and across the South.

In 1925, the Gonzales Independent School District counted 1,095 white students and 389 black students (Edwards High School History). As the economy waned, so did enrollment for black students. In 1930, white students of school age numbered 1,069 scholastics, whereas the black census numbers for school age children decreased to 324 (State Department of Education *The Twenty-Seventh Biennial Report* 1933). The subsistence existence of sharecropping families often necessitated that children labor on the farm in order to ensure the family’s survival. When farmers were unable to eke out a living or lost their farms, entire families moved to the cities, reducing the black population in the rural area.

Table 2.2: Gonzales Independent School District Data 1924-1940

	Scholastic Census Data						Enrollment Data					
	Total	White	%Tot	Black	%Tot	Total	White	%Tot	Black	%Tot		
<b>1924<sup>a</sup></b>	1,399	985	70.4	414	29.6	2,980	2,676	90.0	304	20.0		
<b>1930<sup>b</sup></b>	1,393	1,069	76.7	324	23.3	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a		
<b>1940<sup>c</sup></b>	1,871	1,441	77.0	430	23.0	1,664	1,352	81.2	312	18.8		

<sup>a</sup>(State Department of Education *The Twenty-Fourth Biennial Report* 1926)

<sup>b</sup>(State Department of Education *The Twenty-Seventh Biennial Report* 1933)

<sup>c</sup>(State Department of Education 1943)

Concerned about recent outbreaks of disease in February, 1926, the Gonzales Independent School Board voted to require all Mexican and black students to be vaccinated. The students had one week to comply with the mandate or be expelled. Given the irregular attendance of many African-American students, it is likely that some families were not informed of the vaccination mandate until after the deadline had passed, forcing some children to miss days of school.

The urban population increased in Texas between 1920 and 1930. In 1920, 32% of Texans lived in urban areas. By 1930 that figure had risen to 45%. In Gonzales County, the urban population increased as well, but at a much slower rate. In 1920, 11% of the residents of Gonzales lived in urban areas. By 1930, the urban population had increased to 13.6% of the overall population. With more individuals living in urban areas of the state, more children were attending school regularly and receiving an education. This led to a drop in illiteracy in Texas. In 1930, the illiteracy rate for individuals over the age of 21 was 9.6%, whereas the illiteracy rate for individuals over the age of 10 was only 8.3% (Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930 1932). The difference between these figures illustrates the improved literacy levels among school aged children.

The Gonzales board of trustees reelected George Edwards as principal of the school for blacks in 1930. As the economy worsened during the early 1930s, the Gonzales school board decided to reduce teachers and educational services. One teacher, a librarian, and an office assistant were cut from the white schools and one teacher was cut from the school for black youth as well. Additionally, the salaries for the African-American principal and teachers were reduced. Black teachers that received \$55 per month during 1927 saw their salaries reduced to \$50 per month during 1930, with further reductions to \$40 or \$45 per month by 1933. Agricultural courses at the black high school were eliminated in 1932 for financial reasons. Although the school board added the

eleventh grade to the school for African-Americans in 1933, the additional teacher needed for the extra grade received a significantly lower salary than did a white teacher hired the same year (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 6).

During the 1932-1933 school year, African-American students in Gonzales accounted for 23.7% of the registered scholastic population. Yet, they received only 11.7% of the instructional services budget, with no funds designated for materials and supplies for teaching. The black teachers received a disproportionate 11.3% of the salary funds distributed in the district. Individual teacher's salaries lagged behind those of white teachers (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 6). In addition to receiving substandard pay, African-American teachers were forced to use a portion of their meager wages for classroom supplies as the district afforded them no funds for teaching materials. "If teachers did not spend part of their meager salaries on maps, globes, and paper, the children went without" (Fairclough 2007, 298).

In 1934, Felix Garrett was elected principal at \$85 per month after the board instructed the superintendent to seek George Edward's resignation. The school board minutes did not detail the reason for requesting Edward's resignation. The faculty of the school and many parents in Gonzales were appreciative of George Edwards for his dedication to the school and renamed the school in his honor (Edwards Reunion: Putting the Pieces Together 1986). Although the school was known within the community as Edwards High, the school board continued to refer to the institution as the Negro school.

For the first time, Edwards High School was listed as a classified high school by the state of Texas for the 1934-1935 school year. Edwards earned a Group II, Class A designation, indicating that it was a three year high school. Being a three year high school, Edwards was eligible only for classification and not accreditation. Three year

high schools earning classification were required to operate for a term of nine months, to require 12 credits for graduation, to have 33% of the teachers holding degrees, to have a minimum daily attendance of 30, to offer one science course, and to pay a minimum teacher's salary of \$675 per year (State Department of Education 1934). Interestingly, Edwards High did not meet the minimum salary standard of \$675 for teachers. Only the principal earned this amount in 1934. Female teachers earned roughly \$400 annually in 1945 (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 6). Likely, the State Department of Education used the principal's salary to meet the salary requirement and overlooked the fact that most teachers were paid far less. Since the country was suffering economically the accrediting board may have been more lenient on this requirement. Also, black high schools were classified and accredited as a unit. Failing to meet only a single criterion might not have been grounds to deny classification for the school.

Edwards High retained its classification for the 1935-1936 school year. Despite the school's status as a classified high school, little changed for African-American students in Gonzales. Edwards High enrolled 289 students (Trustees of the John F. Slater Fund 1935). The 1934-1935 school district budget allotted 13.8% of funds for the salaries of black teachers and 86.2% of the funds for white salaries. The board set aside \$200 for teaching supplies for white teachers, but no funds were designated for materials for black teachers (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 6). African-American teachers continued to work in poor facilities with a lack of teaching resources and substandard wages.

The Edwards School decided to present a play as a fundraiser during the spring of 1936. The board authorized the financial endeavor and told the school it could use "any building open to it," except for the white high school's auditorium which Edwards

had requested. The board further granted the black school's request for the use of Apache Field for football, under the supervision of the superintendent (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 6). Apache Field was the football stadium used by Gonzales High School on Friday nights. Edwards High scheduled their home football games for Saturday evenings when no whites were present and the field was not in use (Oral History Interview with Winston Fryer 2006; Oral History Interview with Florence Fryer 2007). By 1937, little had changed in Gonzales. African-Americans continued to receive a paltry 12.3% of district salary funds and no money for teaching supplies. Felix Garrett was re-elected principal in March, 1938 at a salary of \$765, far below that of the white high school principal who received \$2,100. Likewise, teachers' salaries had yet to return to their 1927 levels. In May, 1938, Edwards High celebrated the graduation of five students (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 7).

The State Department of Education changed the system of classifying and accrediting schools for the 1936-1937 school year. High schools were classified either as two-year or four-year high schools; the three year classification was eliminated (State Department of Education 1936). Reasonably, the state agency enacted the change to encourage three year high schools to add an additional year of study and become four-year institutions. Edwards High ended high school at the eleventh grade, making it a three-year high school by state standards. As a three year high school, Edwards lost its state classification and Gonzales was listed as a county which did not operate an accredited high school for African-American youth (State Department of Education 1938).

Many members of the African-American community in Gonzales viewed Edwards High as more than just a place to send their children for an education. It was a

resource for the entire community. Ella Garrett, a homemaking teacher, received permission to teach a class for adults on household employment training from 4:00 to 6:00 in the afternoon, so long as there was no cost to the district. A Works Progress Administration project for adults also met at the school during 1938 and 1939. In 1940, Carrie Spencer, another homemaking teacher, offered a part-time course for adults in "House Hygiene" and "Care of the Sick for Negroes." The board agreed to pay \$110 of the course tuition, with the participants paying the remaining \$40 fee for the class. Courses such as domestic training and home care for the sick were essential offerings for the African-American community. This instruction provided training for some of the few jobs open to blacks at the time. Domestic service was one of the only fields, other than teaching, open to black women during this era. Few African-American doctors were present in the South during the early parts of the twentieth century as their professional education and training opportunities were limited. Those doctors in practice often chose to work in urban areas, leaving few medical personnel to tend to the needs of rural residents. An individual trained in home care of the sick might be the only option available to many black families in outlying areas who needed healthcare.

The Gonzales ISD school board refused to rehire Felix Garrett in March, 1939. Although the official board minutes failed to note a reason, many parents must have been unhappy with their school leader. At the April school board meeting, a divided delegation of black parents appeared before the board, with one group supporting Mr. Garrett and the larger group asking for a change in the school's leadership. In private sessions, the board decided to let their decision of March 13 stand and Mr. Garrett was not re-elected for the ensuing school year (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 7).

Mr. Isaac Spencer was chosen to serve as principal at a salary of \$80 per month and his wife Carrie was hired as a homemaking teacher. Leroy Perryman also was elected as a teacher for the following year. A total of eight teachers worked under Isaac Spencer teaching eleven grades for the 1939-1940 school year. In the spring of 1940, twelfth grade was added to the district's high schools. However, student records indicate that twelfth grade was not taught at Edwards until the 1942-1943 school year. In May, 1940, thirteen students became graduates of the Edwards High (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 7).

### **THE QUEST FOR IMPROVED EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES**

Repeatedly, the Gonzales ISD postponed or denied requests for improved conditions at Edwards High. The board continued to provide for the education of white students at the expense of the district's African-American youth. Despite the continued efforts of black parents to secure an equal education for their children, African-Americans in the Gonzales school district received poorer quality facilities and fewer materials than did whites in the district.

Gonzales ISD took no further action on the new school building that parents requested in 1916 until the board approved building plans for the new facility in June of 1922. The board limited the cost of the structure to \$13,500. Unfortunately, the superintendent rejected the building plans, further delaying construction of the new facility. At the subsequent school board meeting on December 12, 1922, the full board accepted a bid from Neumann Brothers to build a new school for African-American students based on the plans of E.R. Nagel. Six years lapsed between the initial school board's vote to build a new school for African-American students until the acceptance of the bid to construct the building. Such disregard for the needs of black students continued in Gonzales. Not until 1931 did the superintendent agree to put screens around the toilets

at the black school. These two incidents exemplify the inequities suffered by students of color in Gonzales. Unfortunately, these types of inequities were the norm throughout the South. Although the state of Texas appropriated educational funds to school districts based on student populations without regard to race, the expenditure of those funds was at the discretion of the local superintendent and school board. Routinely, the majority of funds were directed to the white schools (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965). Booker T. Washington accurately stated, “The money is actually being taken from the colored people and given to the white schools.” (Washington as quoted in Anderson 1988, 156).

In 1931, Gonzales ISD erected a flagpole on Edwards’ grounds and in 1934 authorized other minor improvements, including repairing window screens and painting cornices. During the fall semester of 1934, the superintendent approved the purchase of an additional gas heater for the school and the installation of a drinking fountain. Prior to this, students used an outdoor pump in front of the school to obtain drinking water (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 6).

The Gonzales ISD school board authorized a survey to evaluate running a sewer line to connect the Edwards School to the city sewer system in March, 1936. The projected cost was \$1,200. In April, a local contractor, J.W. Vernon, presented a plan for a sewage system to be installed at Edwards, which included flush toilets, using government labor. The board tabled the action until such time as they received a complete plan. In August, repairs to the toilets at the school for blacks were halted until the board could determine if the city could get the sewer line through to the school. When the school board received a report that construction of a brick building with toilets and a middle partition to separate boys and girls would cost \$1,000, along with a plumbing connection that would be an additional \$1,000, they again deferred action in April, 1937.

The construction became part of a bond package which was presented to voters and passed in May, 1937. Fred Meischolder, a local contractor, was awarded the contract to construct the building with toilets for \$800; a second contract was awarded to complete the rough in work for plumbing for \$450. The project had not come to fruition by November, as the mayor wanted the school district to share the cost of the sewer line being constructed by the federal Works Progress Administration (WPA). The board agreed and C. E. Juce was hired to install the toilets, as well as the partition. More than one and one half years elapsed from the initial approval for the flush toilets until their completion (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 6).

Gonzales ISD continually thwarted parent's efforts to secure improved facilities at Edwards School for the education of their children. Additionally, the board paid black teachers and administrators wages that were much lower than those earned by white teachers and administrators. Although the African-American academic population remained relatively constant between 1920 and 1940, the black school continued to receive an inequitable share of the district's resources.

This inequity was to continue in the coming years. Although teachers made strides in closing the salary gap, facilities and teaching resources continued to be disproportionately low. Not until successful lawsuits challenging segregation were filed throughout the South did board members take note of the inadequate facilities for black students.

## **1940-1965: Toward Desegregation**

In Gonzales, the black scholastic population fluctuated during the early 1940s, as did the white scholastic population, due to the United States' entry into World War II.

With the exception of the war years, black enrollment increased between 1940 and 1965 from 19% to 27% of the district's enrolled students. Throughout this period, the Gonzales Independent School District continued to provide inequitable resources to African-American students. Students at Edwards High studied from used and dilapidated textbooks and had little laboratory equipment for classroom use (Oral History Interview with Wray Hood 2006; Oral History Interview with Winston Fryer 2006). Black teachers received lower salaries until the enactment of the Gilmer-Aiken laws which equalized teacher pay across the state (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965). White attitudes towards blacks in Gonzales had changed little from earlier years and reflected the views of many in the South. Southerners continued to view the education of blacks as a means of providing better trained laborers, domestic servants, and sharecroppers (Fairclough 2007). Consistent with these beliefs, the Gonzales school board was more generous in granting funds to the school for vocational courses than for academic or extra-curricular endeavors.

The *Brown v Board of Education of Topeka* ruling in May, 1954 mandated school desegregation throughout the United States. After *Brown*, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) expanded throughout the South and took a more active role in improving black schools and furthering integration efforts. Their efforts were visible in Texas and in Gonzales.

In 1940, black Texans accounted for 14.3% of the population. The population of Gonzales had grown to 4,722, a notable increase since 1930 (Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940 1942). The scholastic population exceeded 1,800 in 1940. Black students accounted for 23% of all scholastics and 20% of all the students enrolled in school. African-American students continued to receive an inequitable share of funds toward their education. During the 1940-1941 school year, an average of \$33.18 was

spent on the education of a white student, but only \$14.87 was provided for the education of a black student (State Department of Education 1943).

Due to the induction of many of Gonzales' young men into military service during World War II, the scholastic population receded during the early 1940s. The State Department of Education's 1944-1945 biennial report listed of 1,526 white students and 263 black students enrolled in the Gonzales ISD schools. The average daily attendance for white schools as 1,203 students and for black schools was 217 students. The average cost of educating a white students was \$40.02, nearly twice as much as the \$23 allotted to educate a black student (State Department of Education 1945). By the 1946-1947 school year, Gonzales' scholastic population had declined, but enrollment figures rebounded somewhat (State Department of Education *Thirty-Fifth Biennial Report, State Department of Education* 1949). As young men and women returned home from military service and war-time industries, the number of students enrolled in Gonzales ISD increased.

During 1948, the average daily attendance at Edwards was approximately 422 students; an enrollment which required 18 classroom teachers, two vocational instructors, and two part-time administrators. By contrast, the schools for white students in town had an average daily attendance of 1,319, with 53 classroom teachers, two and one half vocational instructors, a full time administrator, and four special education teachers. The African-American students comprised more than 24% of the scholastic enrollment in the Gonzales Independent School District, yet received only 10.2% of the total instructional funds of the district, with no money designated for teaching supplies. Edwards' teachers made up 25.3% of the district's teaching force, but received only 11.1% of the salary budget. Despite the paucity of funds, the teaching force at Edwards School continued to provide a sound education for students, complete with academic, vocational, and extra-

curricular opportunities. In May, 1948, Edwards High graduated 10 students (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 9).

During the 1949-1950 school year, the Texas Education Agency reported that 1,566 white students and 536 black students were enrolled in the Gonzales ISD schools. The average daily attendance rate for white students was 94.2% and for black students was 78.7% (Texas Education Agency 1950). In March, 1949, the Gonzales ISD board of trustees re-elected Isaac Spencer as principal of Edwards at a salary mandated by the recently enacted Gilmer-Aiken laws which had equalized salaries for teachers across grade levels and racial lines (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 9).

During the spring of 1949, the homemaking department at Edwards received a favorable report from the State Department of Vocational Education. To show its appreciation to the board of trustees for authorizing homemaking classes at the school, the black students invited board members and their wives to a dinner. Those who attended the dinner reported very positive reactions.

Students from the homemaking department and all other students at Edwards High who participated in the Prairie View Interscholastic meet were granted the use of district busses for the event in 1949 (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 10). The Prairie View Interscholastic League was the African-American equivalent of the University Interscholastic League, for white students, which sponsored competitions in athletics, academics, such as declamation and poetry, athletics, and vocational activities (*The Prairie View Interscholastic League Collection 2008*). Many of the 17 graduates of Edwards High School in 1949 participated in the Prairie View Interscholastic League meet (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 10).

In 1950, Gonzales had a population of 5,659 residents, an increase of nearly 1,000 individuals since 1940. Like much of Texas and the South, the urban population of the county grew during the 1940s. Of those living in the Gonzales, 1,034 (18.3%) were listed as “Negro” (Census of Population: 1950 1952). The scholastic census for 1950 noted 2,354 students in the Gonzales Independent School District. By 1950, a preponderance of area youth enrolled in school. The enrollment for Gonzales was listed at 2,477 students, of which 664, or 26.8%, were black and 73.2% were white. Black and white students registered an average daily attendance rate of 80.1% (Texas Education Agency 1952).

Table 2.3: Gonzales Independent School District Data 1940-1960

	Scholastic Census Data					Enrollment Data				
	Total	White	%Tot	Black	%Tot	Total	White	%Tot	Black	%Tot
<b>1940<sup>a</sup></b>	1,871	1,441	77.0	430	23.0	1,664	1,352	81.2	312	18.8
<b>1950<sup>b</sup></b>	2,354	na	na	na	24.2	2,477	1,813	73.2	664	26.8
<b>1960<sup>c</sup></b>	2,658	2,091	78.7	567	21.3	2,100	1,524	72.3	576	27.4

<sup>a</sup>(State Department of Education 1943)

<sup>b</sup>(Texas Education Agency 1952)

<sup>c</sup>(Texas Education Agency 1962)

The Edwards School continued to receive a disproportionately low share of the available educational funds within the district. The state increased the per capita apportionment for the 1950-1951 school year from \$48 to \$50. That year 608 students attended schools for blacks in Gonzales and 1,574 students attended the white schools. Although black students comprised 27.9% of the student population, they received only 12.8% of the funds dedicated to instruction, with no funds earmarked for textbooks. Edwards’ students used second hand books discarded by Gonzales High and Edwards’ teachers received fewer funds for teaching resources that were provided for the teachers at Gonzales High (Oral History Interview with Winston Fryer 2006; Oral History

Interview with Wray Hood 2006; Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965)

Edwards High received limited resources not only for academics, also for enrichment activities for students. The school board denied a request from the homemaking and agricultural teachers at Edwards to take students to "Negro Day" at the Texas State Fair to view the vocational exhibits. A very few students were permitted to travel to Houston during February for the "Fat Stock Show" provided they were able to pay their own expenses. The board permitted the use of two buses for the Houston trip, but offered no funds for meals or other necessities (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 11).

Beginning in the fall of 1951, Leroy Perryman assumed the principalship of Edwards High. Perryman previously had served as a teacher and a coach at the school. He would be the last principal to serve the students of Edwards High School. In October, 1951, the Gonzales ISD school board once again denied a request from the homemaking and vocational agricultural departments at Edwards to allow 50 students to attend "Negro Appreciation Day" at the Texas State Fair on October 15, stating that such a trip was too long for a school day (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 11).

Noah Kline, the vocational agricultural teacher was granted permission to attend the national convention of the New Farmers of America in Atlanta, Georgia, to be held September 29-October 3, 1952. The New Farmers of America was an agricultural organization for black students comparable to the Future Farmers of America organization for white students. Mr. Kline's expenses were to be paid from the vocational agriculture fund, with Mr. Kline covering any additional cost (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 11).

The expenditures authorized by the Gonzales ISD board of trustees for Edwards High's vocational agriculture department proved valuable. During the spring semester of 1953, Noah Kline's vocational agriculture students won the state championship of the New Farmers of America. As a result of several state-wide accolades, the board granted Noah Kline permission to attend the New Farmers of America convention in Atlanta the following year. This time, however, the state offered to pay his expenses if the local district granted permission for the trip. As the trip did not result in expenditures to the district, the board readily approved the trip (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 11).

The scholastic census of 1953 for Gonzales Independent School District reported 1,883 white students and 648 black students in the district (Gonzales Independent School District 1898-1970). White students comprised 74% of the scholastic population and blacks accounted for 26%. Thirty five students graduated from Edwards High School in the spring of 1953, a significant increase over the nine students who had graduated the previous June (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 11).

The scholastic census conducted during the spring of 1954 recorded 1,996 white students and 640 black students in Gonzales ISD; white students comprised 76% of the scholastics and black students accounted for the remaining 24%. Superintendent Bird indicated that an increase in white teachers would be needed for the following year, but that the number of black teachers would be reduced by two due to declining student enrollment. In June, the board re-elected 20 African-American teachers, and Edwards lost only one teacher. In May, 1954, the same month that the United States Supreme Court handed down the famous *Brown* decision, Edwards graduated 18 students (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 12).

Throughout Texas, the *Brown* decision largely was ignored in the years immediately following the Supreme Court's ruling in 1954. In Gonzales, black students continued to attend Edwards High. When the school board broached the subject of desegregation, most discussions centered on ways to avoid complying with the Supreme Court's decision. The superintendent suggested placating local parents and avoiding the desegregation issue by upgrading the buildings and fields of the school for blacks. The board disagreed and little changed for black students in Gonzales (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 12).

During February, 1955, Leroy Perryman was elected to a two year term as principal. In May of that year, longtime teacher and coach Theodore Johns resigned in order to assume the position as principal of the black school in the nearby town of Luling. Surprisingly, in December, the Gonzales ISD school board appointed five teachers from Edwards to the district's committee on textbooks. This was the first time that Edwards High had been represented on the textbook committee (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 12).

At the February, 1957, school board meeting, Leroy Perryman was re-elected principal of Edwards High for an additional two year term. In May, Edwards High experienced a dramatic decline in attendance, as did all schools in the district. Epidemics of measles and mumps kept many students at home for weeks at a time during the spring semester (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 12).

Although all teachers' minimum salaries in Gonzales ISD were governed by the Gilmer-Aiken equalization program, the board authorized a bonus to the salaries of the white coaches, as well as the white band and choral directors, but no teachers or coaches at Edwards received these bonuses. Despite the lack of a salary increase, the teachers at

Edwards remained dedicated to their students and in May, 1957, 25 students graduated from Edwards High School (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 12).

On February 10, 1958, the Gonzales ISD school board renewed Leroy Perryman's contract as principal for two years and reconfirmed Noah Kline as the vocational agricultural teacher. Attendance was reported to be good at Edwards High and at the white schools during the spring semester. Twenty-four seniors graduated from Edwards High at commencement exercises in May, 1958 (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 12).

Throughout Texas' educational history, the data that was gathered on schools and the styles in which that information was reported changed frequently. By the late 1950s many secondary schools were listed as junior/senior high schools. Normally the junior high school consisted of grades seven and eight and the senior high school was comprised of grades nine through twelve.

As school opened in September, 1958, Gonzales ISD enrolled 2,192 students. Gonzales Junior/Senior High housed a student population of 683, whereas Edwards High educated 225 students in grades seven through twelve. Edwards' students comprised 26.1% of the district's students in seventh through twelfth grade (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 12).

At the September 15, 1958, Gonzales ISD school board meeting, the board of trustees received a report from the district's Hale-Aiken committee. This committee sent surveys to teachers, parents, and former students to evaluate the state of facilities and academics at the district's various institutions. The committees' recommendations

reflected the replies they received from teachers and parents at each school. Gonzales High and Edwards High both requested driver education and to have students grouped by ability in courses. At Gonzales High, the committee's recommendations focused on academics. Increasing academic standards and reducing extra-curricular activities were highly recommended by the committee. At Edwards, the recommendations focused on the need for additional courses and materials, as well as a reduction in truancy due to students holding jobs. Specific recommendations included:

1. They very definitely recommended the grouping of the children according to ability and achievement.
2. A planned parent-teacher conference program was requested.
3. They recommended the enforcement of the Child Labor Laws to cut down truancy and a fine assessed the person hiring them during school hours.
4. They asked that some local organization or organizations help them to secure and maintain recreational facilities for their young people.
5. They felt a need for Driver Education.
6. Both schools [Edwards elementary and high school] feel their libraries are inadequate.
7. Edwards teachers requested more teaching aids, such as maps, charts, etc.
8. Edwards High feels the need for more science and a foreign language plus a stronger vocational training program.
9. In-services and work shop training was also requested.
10. There were several requests for a school nurse (Hale-Aiken Committee report contained in Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965).

During October, 1958, the Texas Education Agency informed Superintendent Bird that he must conduct weekly checks of attendance registers at the district's black schools, due to earlier concerns that black teachers were not keeping accurate daily attendance records and were "padding" the attendance numbers. Further, the superintendent learned that state auditors would conduct five random audits throughout the remainder of the year. The first audit occurred on October 13 and the state

representative reported that he found all to be in “top shape” [at Edwards] (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 12).

The Gonzales ISD board of trustees was aware of desegregation efforts throughout the South. The board chose to ignore these initiatives and to preserve the status quo in Gonzales. They directed resources to the white schools at the expense of the education and the welfare of the district’s African-American students. For example, Billy Cassell, an Edwards High football player, seriously injured his knee during a football game early during the 1948 football season. He had been hospitalized for almost one week and was expected to be hospitalized for up to 60 additional days. The district’s student insurance policy was limited and Billy Cassell’s benefits nearly were exhausted. Rather than approve the district’s coverage of any additional expenses, the board voted to ask the doctor treating Cassell to keep the bill as low as possible. Further, the school board asked Edwards High to hold a benefit to pay the boy’s hospital costs. The board received the final hospital bill of \$426.75 for the injured player in November and an additional bill of \$260 from the doctor. As the district’s insurance policy would only pay \$434, the board decided to defer payment of the remaining \$252.75 until it could request a reduction in the bill and determine how much the African-American community would contribute. Edwards High indeed hosted a benefit for Cassell and raised \$75 to offset the remaining hospital and doctor’s expenses. Finally, in December, the Gonzales ISD board of trustees voted to pay the outstanding balance of \$177.75 resulting from Billy Cassell’s injury (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 12).

Texas Education Agency auditors visited Edwards High again in December, 1958, to inspect attendance records and found that only one error had been made during the first

six weeks. The noted error was made by a substitute teacher and not by a regular teacher at Edwards High. The auditor reported that the district's African-American schools "were among the top 10% in the state for records, organization and work observed" (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 12).

At their January 13, 1959, meeting, the Gonzales ISD board of trustees approved a policy change requiring 24 credits for graduation, rather than the 22½ that currently were required. The physical education requirement was increased to one year and one year of health education also was instituted, resulting in an additional 1½ credits. The board also voted to provide Noah Kline with \$30 for the rental of 10 acres of land for the continuation of the vocational agriculture department's maize project (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 12).

The enrollment figures for March, 1959, noted that the black student enrollment had declined from 623 to 595 students. As a result of the lower numbers, the board decided to defer the re-election of black teachers until June. Deferment provided the board with additional time to allow the enrollment figures to increase in the black schools. The current numbers permitted only 20 teachers at Edwards the following year, rather than the 21 that currently were employed at the school. By May, the average daily attendance at Edwards (elementary and high school) and Riverside, the second black elementary school in Gonzales, fluctuated between 505 and 508 students, necessitating the reduction of one teacher the following year. Edwards High graduated a record 39 students at the June, 1959 commencement ceremony, exactly half the number of graduates at Gonzales High (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 12).

Only 20 African-American teachers were rehired in August, 1959, for the ensuing school year due to the reduced average daily attendance numbers. Fourteen and two thirds teacher units were assigned to Edwards and five and one third were assigned to Riverside.<sup>12</sup> The Gonzales ISD board of trustees continued to ignore the requests of African-American students, parents, and employees in the district. The principal of Edwards High requested an assistant for the custodian, only to be rebuked by the board. The board stated that if the current custodian could not do the work required, they would dismiss him and find someone who could. The black community in Gonzales requested an African-American driver for a bus route currently being driven by a white driver, a Mr. Schultz. Again the board refused their request and decided to keep Schultz until his retirement, stating it would consider a “Negro” for the position at that time (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 12).

During the summer of 1959, the Texas Education Agency increased the state per capita apportionment to \$76 for the 1959-1960 school year. As the fall semester began in 1959, Edwards High had an enrollment of 210 students; Gonzales High’s enrollment was 398.

The Gonzales Independent School District ended the fall term in 1959 with an enrollment in the white schools of 1,848 and 561 students in the black schools. These increased enrollment figures permitted the board to hire two part time teachers for the second semester. Unfortunately, both teaching positions were assigned to the white schools, with neither Edwards nor Riverside reaping any benefit from their increased

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<sup>12</sup> Each teacher unit was the equivalent of one fulltime teacher. A partial teaching unit permitted the school to hire a part time instructor.

enrollment. Possibly as a concession, the board agreed to fund Noah Kline's maize project for another semester (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 13).

Despite the overall urban growth in the Texas during the 1950s, the population of Gonzales remained relatively constant. Gonzales had a population of 5,829 in 1960, an increase of only 179 individuals during the previous decade (Census of Population: 1950 1952; Census of Population: 1960 1961).

The scholastic census figures released in 1960 noted 29,096 white students in Gonzales ISD, an increase of 67 students since 1959. However, school attendance by black students declined. Five hundred sixty seven black students were recorded, a decrease of four students from the previous year (Texas Education Agency 1962). Fewer students required fewer teachers, and only 19.4 teaching units were assigned to Edwards High School for the 1960-1961 school year. This meant the potential loss of one black teacher for the following year. The teachers at Edwards valued their jobs and began transporting students to school to increase the average daily attendance rate. Teaching units were assigned to schools based on enrollment and average daily attendance figures. Higher attendance rates permitted a school to employ more teachers. As the school year commenced in September, 1960, the actual enrollment at Edwards High was greater than anticipated and the student body increased by 23 students from the previous year. By October, the Edwards student body had added an additional 43 students, bringing the school's total enrollment to 642 students (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 13).

At its April 12, 1961, meeting, the school board rejected a request for black children to visit the zoo in San Antonio, citing the rejection of a request that children in the white school visit the San Antonio missions (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 13). Black students would not be granted privileges that had not been extended to white students.

The local NAACP proved a thorn in the school board's side. The relationship between the two groups had been adversarial from the beginning and the school board was suspect of the NAACP's motives. Throughout the South, the NAACP supported lawsuits forcing the desegregation of schools and the retention of black teachers. The Gonzales ISD board of trustees did not wish to have the group initiate similar actions in Gonzales and warned black teachers against taking part in NAACP activities. To placate the NAACP leadership in Gonzales County, the trustees realized that they would have to address, in some meaningful way, the NAACP's complaints regarding the facilities on the black campuses. On December 19, 1960, the school board acknowledged that they needed a long range plan for the buildings at the black schools in the district. At the same meeting, the board appointed Leroy Perryman to the district's textbook selection committee (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 13).

Two hundred thirty six students were enrolled in Edwards High in September, 1961. Enrollment increased at Edwards and at the beginning of the fall term in 1962, 377 students were enrolled at Edwards High and 498 students were enrolled at Gonzales High. African-American students in Gonzales represented 43% of the town's total high school population, a much larger black representation than was present in the town's

overall population. On May 29, 1963, 27 Edwards High seniors became alumni during graduation ceremonies at Apache Field (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 13).

The Gonzales ISD school board did not renew Superintendent Bird's contract for the 1964-1965 school year. As school began in the fall of 1964, the enrollment at the black schools in Gonzales had declined. With a combined average daily attendance of 475.62, the schools were in danger of losing faculty positions. An average daily attendance of 489 was required for the schools to qualify for a full time principal, a librarian, and the current cadre of teachers. The school board considered fining black parents who kept their children out of school for fall harvesting duties. Mr. Havel, Superintendent Bird's replacement, informed the board that attendance at the black schools was down not due to seasonal farm work, but rather due to the fact that 65 Negro students had moved, had gotten married, or were "afflicted" (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 13).

The Gonzales ISD school board made a radical decision at its March 9, 1965, meeting. Beginning in the fall of 1965, the district's high schools were to be desegregated and Edwards High was to be closed. The Edwards High School building would be used to house an elementary school and junior high school. Leroy Perryman and four teachers from Edwards High were to be assigned to the junior high and nine other teachers were terminated due to desegregation. Initially, no teachers from Edwards were assigned to teach at Gonzales High. In April, the board decided to move two former Edwards' teachers from the junior high school to Gonzales High to resolve the legal problem of not having a biracial faculty in a biracial school. In May, 1965, Edwards High School

graduated its final class of 34 students. The Edwards building served briefly as a junior high and then an elementary school. Subsequently, the building was closed and during the early 1970s, Gonzales ISD sold the property to the city of Gonzales for the sum of \$12,000 (Edwards High School History).

### **THE PRICE OF EQUITY**

Edwards High School received a disproportionate share of Gonzales ISD's fiscal resources throughout its history. Time after time requests for improved facilities and equipment were ignored or denied by the school board. Students at Edwards used second-hand books and equipment. Often the only funds granted to Edwards High were those which supported vocational education. When school consolidation increased the enrollment at Edwards, the school board responded by tearing down the closed rural schools and reusing the lumber at Edwards.

During the 1960s, parents enlisted the aid of the local chapter of the NAACP to lobby for improved facilities and materials for Edwards' students. The Gonzales ISD board of trustees was wary of the NAACP, since the organization had initiated several successful legal battles to end segregation. The school board made minimal improvements in the district's black schools to perpetuate segregation as long as possible. The board finally realized that it would have to provide an equal education for students in the district's black schools to avoid a legal battle. The lack of funds available to provide an equal education for black youth led to desegregation in Gonzales.

Throughout the 1940s, Edwards High School received minimal funds for materials and equipment. Edwards High was authorized to buy supplies for teaching homemaking in October, 1941, provided the expenditures did not exceed \$30. In 1942, Superintendent A.O. Bird permitted Carrie Spencer, the homemaking teacher, to teach a

class in household employment for adults at Edwards. At the July, 1942, school board meeting, the superintendent notified the trustees that the sewing machines at Edwards were in poor condition and recommended the purchase of two new machines. The board delayed the purchase, pending an estimate on the cost of the new equipment. No further mention was made of new equipment for the homemaking department at the school. In 1943, the school board authorized improvements for Edwards that included much needed new window shades, roof repairs, and repainting of the interior of the school. By 1945, many of the desks were falling apart and unsafe for students. The desks, like most of the equipment used the school, were second-hand castoffs from the white schools. In the fall of 1945, the board again recycled furniture from closed rural schools for use at Edwards. Desks no longer needed at white rural schools, which had been consolidated into Gonzales ISD, were sent to Edwards for its students to use (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 8).

In the fall of 1946, homemaking teacher Carrie Spencer was granted a one year leave of absence to pursue a Master of Arts degree, leaving the school with no domestic arts courses. A delegation of parents approached the board and requested homemaking courses, as well as a course in agriculture. Reacting as it had to previous requests from the black community, the Gonzales ISD board tabled the request stating that it should be able to make some additions in the future. Again in the spring of 1947 black parents and two graduates of Edwards High petitioned the school board asking for changes at the school. The board agreed to take up the matter at the subsequent meeting. In June, 1947, the school board authorized a homemaking course be added at Edwards High beginning in the fall, with clothing being taught the first semester. Four sewing machines were to be purchased at a cost of \$80 each. Carrie Spencer, the previous homemaking teacher, was reappointed as teacher for the following fall (Gonzales Independent School District

Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 9). The homemaking courses were important to students at the school. The majority of graduates from Edwards entered the workforce or became homemakers immediately after graduation. Courses in domestic arts and agriculture gave students skills that allowed them to secure jobs in the few fields, such as farming and domestic service, which were open to blacks at the time.

During July, 1947, the board paid Mr. Frank Stanford \$389 to repair the roofs of buildings on Edwards' grounds. Additionally, phones were installed at Edwards in August of 1947 (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 9). Gonzales followed the mandates of the new Gilmer-Aiken laws, passed in 1949, which called for school districts' consolidation. During the late 1940s, several small, rural districts were consolidated into the Gonzales Independent School District. Many of these smaller outlying districts petitioned to be admitted to Gonzales ISD. The Gonzales ISD annexed several rural school districts in 1947, including Johnson Grove #2, Maurin, Oak Forest, John C. Jones, Diamond Grove, Wrightsboro, Hamon, Cost, Needa, Monthalia, Slayden, and Stieren #11 (Gonzales ISD Field Notes). The district moved a building from one of the closed rural schools to Edwards High to be used as a machine shop and authorized a new roof for the relocated structure. Although the school board had authorized a clothing class for the school to begin the fall of 1947, it failed to make good on its promise. In December, the board authorized a sewing class for the second semester with the promise of a cooking class the following year. Due to increased enrollment, two additional teachers were needed for the second term. Alta Mae Phelps Chrisman was hired to teach in the high school division at Edwards (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 9)..

The annexation of rural schools by the Gonzales Independent School District continued in 1948. Students in the Terryville, Rupert-Hillside, and Dilworth districts

began attending school in Gonzales (Gonzales ISD Field Notes). The board recognized that improvements were needed at Edwards High because an increased number of students were enrolled. At the April school board meeting, the superintendent reported that eight additional classrooms would cost \$40,000, the erection of a homemaking cottage would be \$7,000, and the construction of an auditorium/gymnasium would be an additional \$40,000 expense. The board decided to address Edwards' needs at a later date (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 9).

The years of 1948 and 1949 proved to be significant in Edwards' history. The school experienced growth in facilities and supplies never before witnessed. Increasing enrollment was one factor which drove this expansion. A second factor which drove improvements at Edwards was a report from the State Department of Education which noted improvements that needed to be made at the school. W.R. Lofland, the Deputy Superintendent of Schools for District 15 for the Classification and Accreditation of Schools, issued a report to the Gonzales ISD superintendent and the president of the board of trustees in February, 1948. The state official listed his observations and noted required improvements.

Observations:

1. Recent consolidations have brought in additional colored children, some of whom must still be taught in rural buildings. Additional teaching room will have to be provided when those rural children are brought in, since teaching space is now at a premium at the Edwards school.
2. Most improvement has been made in painting, in playground equipment, and in providing a shop.

Recommendations:

1. That additional rooms be provided as soon as possible.
2. That a standard set-up for teaching General Sciences and Biology be provided before Vocational Agriculture is added.
3. It would improve matters if the home making could be taught in a separate cottage.
4. The library should be started at this school and should be added to gradually as

means are available (as cited in Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 9).

In June, 1948, the board fulfilled its promise to add an agriculture class at Edwards and advertised for a vocational agriculture teacher for the fall term. No provision was made for improvement in science equipment as recommended by the state official. By July, 1948, the board finally agreed that three additional classrooms would be required if the Elm Slough school was to be closed. To reduce costs, the board decided to move an additional building from one of the rural schools which had been closed to Edwards. However, Dr. Schroeder of the trustee's building committee stated that the old buildings were not in a condition to be moved and recommended that the buildings be torn down and the lumber be used to rebuild the structure on the Edwards grounds (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 9). The reuse of the lumber from closed schools highlights the fact the Gonzales ISD board of trustees chose to spend the least amount possible on facilities and teaching resources for Edwards High. Repeatedly the board demonstrated its disregard for schooling of African-American youth.

Although the board of trustees had granted Edwards an agriculture course, no land was available for students to raise crops or to house animals. In September, 1948, the board agreed to rent a plot of land from one Molly Jones for \$12 per year to be used for the Edwards High School garden. The board also authorized J. L. Pate to use the lumber from the demolished rural school to build two additional rooms at Edwards. For the first time, homemaking teacher Carrie Spencer was allotted \$100 for supplies (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 9). Although this amount less than that authorized for homemaking supplies at Gonzales High, it was significant as no funds had ever been granted to Edwards High for this purpose.

For the first time, Gonzales ISD provided some students from Edwards with bus transportation to and from school. Prior to this time, bus service had only been provided only for white students and black students were forced to walk to school or make their own arrangements for transportation. In October, 1948, the school board authorized the expenditure of \$154 to pay various African-American members of the community for transporting students to Edwards during the current school year (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 9).

The board of trustees granted the Edwards' High basketball team permission to use the gymnasium at Gonzales High for games until such time as Edwards had a facility of its own. Like football, basketball games were held on Saturdays when no white students or parents were present at Gonzales High. For Edwards to have a combination auditorium/gymnasium with eight classrooms, \$130,000 was needed. Although the board of trustees approved a bond issue in February, 1949, only \$75,000 was slated for Edwards, far below the amount estimated for the needed construction (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 9).

Architects submitted plans for a gymnasium to seat 400 people and an auditorium that could house an additional 500 individuals at the April 25, 1949, school board meeting. In addition to the Edwards gymnasium, the board also sought bids for improving Apache Field, the athletic field at Gonzales High School. Bids for the Apache Field improvements ranged from \$60,000 to \$80,000. After the voters of Gonzales approved the construction bonds, the board accepted a bid from Bill Barton to construct the Edwards gymnasium for \$59,000. The board agreed to delay commencing construction for six to eight weeks to allow Mr. Barton to bid on the Apache Field improvements. In July, construction of the gym again was delayed until August. However, the delay was much longer than six to eight weeks; rather, the gymnasium's

completion was delayed for 10 months. In February, 1950, Mr. Barton reported that the gym should be completed by the end of the month. (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 10).

The Masterson Distribution Company of San Antonio was awarded the contract to provide backboards for the new Edwards' High gymnasium. During the construction of the Edwards gymnasium, the board continued to allow the Edwards High School's basketball teams to use the gymnasium at Gonzales High on Saturday nights. After the completion and inspection of the gymnasium, the board insured the facility for only \$30,000. Although the board voted to place a bronze plaque in the vestibule of the new building, they declined to participate in dedication ceremonies and instead, left that in the "hands of the colored people" (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 10). Although the Gonzales ISD board wanted to be sure that members of the African-American community remembered that a white school board had provided the school's new facility, the members of the board did not want to participate in a social event with black parents.



Illustration 2.3: Exterior of Edwards High Gymnasium 2006



Illustration 2.4: Interior of Edwards High School Gymnasium 2006

At the beginning of the 1949-1950 school year, four bus routes transported Gonzales' African-American students to Edwards. Sixteen bus routes were in place for transporting the white students of the district to school. Permission was granted for

Edwards to use buses to transport the varsity and junior football teams and the pep squads to out of town sporting events. For the first time, the Edwards Gophers had the opportunity to travel by bus to Austin to view a college football game in November. Further, the boys and girls basketball teams at Edwards High were provided bus transportation for out of town games (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 10).

The state raised the per capita allotment to \$62 for the 1951-1952 school year, the highest authorized to that date. Utilizing a portion of these additional funds, the Gonzales ISD school board authorized the purchase of a new stove for the cafeteria at Edwards, but indicated that the school would have to furnish its own refrigeration system. Superintendent Bird requested \$1,000 for books for Gonzales High and the white elementary schools and \$500 for the black schools; the school board voted to give the white schools \$800 and the black schools \$200. Carrie Spencer received \$200 for supplies for the homemaking department, as well as a new sewing machine and two irons. The request for a second new sewing machine was denied. Additionally, during the spring of 1951, the school board agreed to lease an additional lot from one Tom Janus for \$18 for use by the vocational agriculture department. This lot was in addition to the lot currently being leased from Molly Jones (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 11).

The Edwards High football team needed new equipment for the season in 1951. Although Coach Theodore Johns had requested new gear, none was forthcoming. Again in the spring, the coach requested new football equipment for his players. This request garnered some outdated, second hand equipment from Gonzales High School. After examining the helmets, pads, and uniforms, Coach Johns remarked to the superintendent that he would not allow his players to use the equipment as he did not want them to get

hurt, anymore than the coach at Gonzales High would want his players injured. The superintendent acknowledged Coach Johns concerns and convinced the board of trustees to purchase new football equipment for Edwards High. In April, 1952, the board of trustees authorized \$519.45 for the purchase of athletic supplies and equipment for Edwards School for the following school year (Edwards High School History).

The school board continued to support vocational education. A new building housing the vocational agriculture department complete with classrooms, an office, a shop, and storeroom, not to exceed \$1,500, was approved by the school board during February, 1952. The building Edwards High received turned out not to be a newly constructed edifice, but rather a portion of the old school from Canoe Creek, which closed due to its consolidation into Gonzales ISD. In October, the board authorized heating for the new building and for two first grade classrooms. Although the school board had approved heating for the agricultural building which had been moved from Canoe Creek to Edwards High, the work was never carried out, nor were the first grade classrooms heated. The board granted approval in October, 1953, for the heating units to be installed, as long as the cost did not exceed \$1,000 (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 11).

More land was needed for Edwards High to expand its vocational agriculture program, which included a hog raising project. Although the school board was concerned that some community members might disapprove, they granted Edwards High students the use of a lot belonging to a school board member's mother, Mrs. Caskill, for the hog raising project. During November, 1952, Edwards High was allotted \$300 to purchase books for its library and Reva E. Johnson was hired as the librarian in May, 1953. Additionally the Gonzales ISD board budgeted \$800 for teaching supplies and authorized

\$150 for four basketball courts to be built at Edwards High (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 11).

Edwards received additional funds and supplies for the fall of 1955. Buses were appropriated to transport students at Gonzales High and Edwards High to all interscholastic league sponsored events. The homemaking departments of both high schools were allotted four dollars per pupil for the school year as well. In October, 1954, Edwards High enrolled 84 students in homemaking classes and Gonzales High enrolled 105 students. The \$750 that Edwards High received for supplies during the fall of 1955 represented only 16% of the total funds allotted for supplies in the district. Even the vocational programs which received the most favorable support from the school board were not provided with the necessary tools and supplies. When Noah Kline requested \$350 for tools for the vocational agriculture department, he received \$250 (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 12).

During December, 1955, the school board rented fifteen used typewriters for use at Edwards and authorized \$472.50 for the purchase of tables and chairs to use with the secondhand typewriters. In January, 1956, the State Department of Health conducted an inspection of schools in Gonzales ISD. The only recommendation noted for Gonzales High was the installation of a new sanitary style drinking fountain head. Edwards was reported to need a litany of improvements.

1. The school campus should be graded and leveled so that a safe adequate playground may be provided for the children.
2. Some type of adjustable shade should be installed in the classrooms so that glare and unusual brightness may be controlled.
3. Broken fixtures and windows in the restrooms should be repaired or replaced.
4. Properly dispensed soap and single use towels should be provided for the restrooms.
5. Improved cleaning procedures are indicated in the boys' dressing room and in the outside toilets.
6. The gas burner under the sink in the cafeteria should be used for heating the

water. The Texas Food and Drug Law requires that dishes be sanitized by means of immersion in 180° water for two minutes or 170° water for three minutes.

7. Kitchen utensils should be stored above the floor in a clean dry place.
8. Better housekeeping procedures are indicated on the shelves and in other areas where dishes and utensils are stored (State of Texas Department of Health letter contained in Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965).

Although the board of trustees received the letter from the health department during February, 1956, the first discussion of improvements at Edwards did not begin until July, when the board decided to replace the window shades and install a sanitary drinking fountain head (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 12)

The homemaking departments at Edwards High and at Gonzales High were allotted two dollars per student for supplies each year from 1956-1958. Similarly, the vocational agriculture department continued to receive the support of the Gonzales school board. The program received approval to rent 30 acres of land at a cost of \$2 per acre in September, 1957. Again in 1958 the Gonzales ISD board of trustees provided the vocational agriculture department at Edwards High with \$130 for the continuation of the students' maize project (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 12).

In May, 1959, the board of trustees discussed the need for new restrooms and for new roofing on rooms at Edwards. As it had done repeatedly, the board discussed Edwards High's needs but took no action (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 12). In December, 1959, Edwards High requested \$2,283 to purchase new band instruments for student use from the San Antonio Music Company. The funds were to be repaid to the district by parents over the course of two years. Unlike past requests from Edwards High, the board approved the purchase of the band

instruments, likely because the district did not have to absorb the expense. Despite the board's approval for the purchase of the instruments, it failed to authorize the distribution of funds to complete the transaction (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 13).

Although Edwards High parents had requested several improvements, the Gonzales ISD board of trustees generally ignored parental requests or tabled the requests until later meetings when parents were not present. Then the board either dismissed the requests or voted against expending resources for the black school. In 1960, the request for improvements at Edwards came not from local parents, but from the NAACP, a national organization that supported successful legal suits against segregation throughout the South. Five members of the Gonzales chapter of the NAACP attended the school board meeting on April 11, 1960, and presented the board with a list of problems at the district's black schools. The group reiterated that they were not seeking desegregation, only improvements for the black schools. They asked the board to act on the requests immediately. After a brief discussion, the board responded that the current financial condition of the district prohibited a bond election for new buildings, but that the board would consider the request for repairs. The board appointed a committee to visit the Edwards School on April 12 at 2:30 p.m. to study the condition of the facility (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 13).

During May, 1960, the principals at Riverside Elementary and Edwards High, Mildred Stewart and Leroy Perryman, presented the school board with a list of needed repairs for their respective schools. Riverside needed \$1,000 in repairs and Edwards required \$1,500 for improvements and repairs. The board agreed to consider the request, but first needed to determine if the schools actually required the requested amount for repairs. In June, Gonzales High requested \$1,500 for instructional supplies and materials

and Edwards requested \$2,400 for materials for instruction. Not surprisingly, the board granted only Gonzales High's request, allotting no money for Edwards High. The board of trustees did approve Edwards' request for the continuation of the band program (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 13).

Throughout the summer of 1960, several improvements were made to the Edwards' facility. The 1922 building was "completely done over," the gym floor was refinished and other floors were treated, walks were constructed, and the restrooms were repaired. The board noted that some repairs remained to be completed. Superintendent Bird repeated the request to purchase \$2,400 worth of band instruments for Edwards High from the San Antonio Music Company, with the district carrying the debt for two years. Yet again, the board postponed action on the request. At the subsequent board meeting, the trustees approved the purchase of instruments for Edwards High, as long as the purchase price did not exceed \$1,000 (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 13).

During the fall of 1960, the school board continued its support of vocational education at Edwards High. The trustees approved a request from the vocational agriculture department for the use of 13 acres of land, seeds, and fertilizer. Again in 1961, the vocational agriculture teacher at Edwards High, Noah Kline, requested \$1,000 from the district to equip the farm shop, but said that if he could have an arc welding machine, the school would consider an alternate plan. Not surprisingly, the board preferred the idea of the arc welding machine at a cost of \$150, rather than the \$1,000 requested to outfit the shop (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 13). Interestingly, Kline had requested the arc welding equipment the previous year, but his request had been denied. By requesting the equipment again the

following year as an alternative to a larger financial request, Kline was able to secure the necessary equipment for his tool shop.

The Gonzales County NAACP chapter again sent a delegation to the school board meeting on March 13, 1961, and presented a petition signed by several parents. The board agreed to consider the request but took no action. In April, the NAACP was back. L.E. Ausbie, a local NAACP representative, presented the case for a new high school facility for black students, highlighting the fact that the group was not seeking desegregation, merely better facilities and resources for black students. Another member of the delegation, W.E. Green, posited that the students at Edwards were not getting a proper education. Students did not have the proper subjects for college entrance, old books were being used, and the school was so overcrowded that some classes were being held on the porch of the school for lack of space. W. E. Green further complained that the facility did not have a working cafeteria (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 13).

Frustrated with the constant barrages by the Gonzales County Branch of the NAACP, the board declared that they were unable to build a new school due to a lack of funds. Addressing the NAACP complaint regarding a substandard education at Edwards, the board of trustees informed the group that Mrs. Carroll of the Texas Education Agency had worked in the Negro schools for one day and had commended the institutions (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 13). The Gonzales ISD board of trustees hoped that this would end NAACP interference in local school district matters.

The NAACP employed a new strategy in November, 1961, sending letters to several board members outlining their complaints regarding the black schools. McCaskill, the board's president, informed Mr. Ausbie of the NAACP that the board would consider

the problems related to the black schools at the school board's February meeting. The prodding of the NAACP and the various integration lawsuits throughout Texas prompted superintendent Bird to recommend improvements at Edwards High at the February, 1962, school board meeting. Bird's recommendations included remodeling eight classrooms in the brick building, remodeling the cafeteria, redoing the four rooms in back of the practice football field, painting all the buildings, and building ten additional classrooms, as well as an office and a restroom. Twelve hundred dollars was recommended for the vocational agriculture department and twenty-five hundred dollars was requested for furniture. The board of trustees agreed to consider the superintendent's recommendations (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 13).

Gonzales ISD purchased 60 new desks and chairs for the typing department at Gonzales High during July, 1962. Further, the board instructed that the old desks and chairs no longer needed at Gonzales High be refinished and sent to Edwards High (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 13). Despite the cajoling of the NAACP and the uncertainty of the desegregation issue, the Gonzales ISD board of trustees could not bring themselves to furnish Edwards High with new furniture. They insisted on perpetuating inequities between the black and white schools under their purview. By continuing to send the black schools second hand equipment and books, the district administration freed money that could be funneled into the white schools of the district, even though the state was apportioning funds to the district without regard to the race of the students.

On October 8, 1962, the school board received a request for \$1,200 to purchase tools for the Edwards High farm shop. This time, the board of trustees said they would obtain bids for the tools and then decide about the purchase, once more delaying the issue. Finally, in December, 1962, the Gonzales ISD school board approved the purchase

of tools for the farm shop in the amount of \$227.30 and an arc welding machine for \$185.90, significantly less than the \$1,200 originally requested for tools (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 13).

Early in 1963, the board of trustees called for a meeting of the building and personnel committees to discuss desegregation, facilities, and improvements to be scheduled for January 17, 1963. In February, the committees provided the school board with an estimate for needed repairs at Edwards High. A sum of \$5,000 was needed to put the school in a workable condition: plumbing would cost \$1,000, painting and general repairs were estimated to be \$2,500, and the erection of a covered walkway was \$1,500 (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 13). As it had done with numerous such requests, the board of trustees agreed to study the proposal but took no action.

Confronted with the reality that repairs to Edwards High were necessary and would be costly, the board sought other ways to save money. A slowly declining student population had strained district finances as school board leaders continued to segregate students by race and to funnel disproportionate amounts of money to white schools. Increasing pressure throughout the United States and Texas for desegregation alerted the board to the fact that one of the only ways to maintain segregation was to provide the black schools with facilities and resources equal to white schools. Without sufficient funds available, the board was forced to consider other options. In July, 1963, the Gonzales ISD school board decided to enact a voluntary desegregation policy for students for the 1963-1964 school year. Black students who were seniors at Edwards High School, and who desired, could attend Gonzales High provided that they applied by August 13. No seniors from Edwards chose to change schools (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 13).

During July, 1964, Havel, the new superintendent of the Gonzales school district, reported that he did not anticipate any African-American students transferring from Edwards and recommended that some used desks be purchased for the Edwards facility at a cost of \$3.00 each. The board approved the purchase. This was to be the Gonzales ISD board of trustees' last effort to maintain segregation. The limited finances of Gonzales ISD finally forced the desegregation of Gonzales' schools.

## **Summary and Conclusions**

Throughout the story of Edwards High from the early 1900s through the late 1940s, an excessive imbalance in funding existed between the schools for whites and the school for blacks in Gonzales. Although teachers' salaries improved somewhat during the 1950s due to the passage of the Gilmer-Aiken laws, black schools continued to receive an inequitable share of available resources. The schools for whites received a disproportionately large share of the district's funds for school buildings, equipment, and teaching materials. The local school board continually denied requests from Edwards High for improved facilities. Even after a new school building was constructed during the 1920s, the all white Gonzales ISD board of trustees refused to purchase new equipment, such as desks, for Edwards. However, the board supported, to some degree, vocational education, especially agricultural courses. The board granted requests for small plots of land to allow students to plant maize or raise hogs. The fact that these basic needs had not been provided for the school demonstrated the board's disregard for the needs of African-American students in the district. The school board's attitude was shared by a majority of Gonzales residents. The board of trustees for Gonzales ISD was elected by the white residents of the town who supported basic schooling for blacks, but wanted the majority

of their tax dollars to support the schools that their children attended, the schools for whites. The residents who supported blacks were few in number and afraid to challenge the status quo. Those who questioned the majority opinion were in jeopardy of ill treatment, as were blacks who challenged the white majority (Oral History Interview with Wray Hood 2006). Although vocational education was prevalent in white and black high schools, the white high school received a larger share of the funds for vocational education in Gonzales. In practice, vocational education at Edwards High was shortchanged also.

A former county superintendent told of a prominent white woman in Gonzales in the 1950s who attempted to hire a recent graduate of Edwards High for housekeeping duties, since the young woman had studied domestic arts in high school. The young African-American woman did not know how to turn on a vacuum cleaner or work several appliances in the kitchen. When asked why she was unable to perform these basic household tasks, the young woman responded that she had not seen such equipment in high school. Frustrated, the prominent Gonzales resident approached the Gonzales ISD superintendent and informed the official that if he did not supply Edwards with some household equipment for the domestic arts classes, she would report him to the state office of education (Oral History Interview with Genevieve Vollentine 2007). This example illustrates the level of discrimination suffered by students of Edwards High at the hands of the Gonzales ISD school board. Although the white Gonzales resident sought additional resources for the domestic arts classes at Edwards, her motives were self-serving.

Since the school board failed to provide adequate facilities and equipment for the schooling of African-American youth, parents sought better resources for their children. The school board denied parental requests or tabled motions until a future meeting when

parents were not present. This method of dismissing the concerns of Edwards' parents further demonstrates the discriminatory attitudes held by the members of the Gonzales ISD board of trustees, as well as residents of the town.

The Gonzales ISD board sought to maintain racial segregation in all circumstances possible. Edwards' students were permitted to use Apache Field, the field belonging to the white high school, on Saturdays, when whites were not present (Oral History Interview with Winston Fryer 2006; Oral History Interview with Florence Fryer 2007). The board denied Edwards' request to present a fundraising play in the Gonzales High gymnasium (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 7). Although the Edwards High School basketball teams received permission to use the Gonzales High School gymnasium, they only could do so on Saturdays when no white students or parents were present. Sharing the white high school's facilities with blacks might give the impression of equal status between the races, a condition objectionable to most Gonzales residents. The board again demonstrated their desire for racial segregation at the dedication of the gymnasium at Edwards in 1950. Although the group chose to install a plaque commemorating the board members responsible for the gymnasium's construction, they refused to take part in the celebration surrounding the dedication. To do so would have suggested a willingness to socialize with members of the black community in Gonzales. Nevertheless, board members accepted an invitation from the domestic arts department to attend a luncheon in 1949 (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 9). However, the board members were served a luncheon by the students, placing them in a position of importance with the black students in a subservient role. In the main, the attitudes held the members of the Gonzales ISD board of trustees, like many white southerners, were patronizing and

prejudicial toward blacks. The manifestation of these attitudes was the inequitable distribution of resources for the education of African-American youth in Gonzales.

Despite the injustices suffered by the students and faculty of Edwards High, the school thrived. Edwards High received accreditation in 1947 and graduated several students who attended college and returned to the school as teachers. These teachers hoped to assist the next generation of students with navigating the difficulties of a Jim Crow society and to prepare the students for a time when racial segregation no longer existed. The following chapter examines the students who attended Edwards High and the many facets of their high school experience.

## CHAPTER 3

### WE ARE THE GOPHERS



Illustration 3.1: Miss Homecoming and Attendants 1950 (Photo courtesy of Gonzales Independent School District)

The earliest student records for Edwards High date from the mid 1930s. Gonzales ISD school officials indicated that a warehouse fire had destroyed earlier student records. The information contained in the students' permanent records varied by year. Information such as a student's birth date, place of birth, courses studied, credits earned, and the date a student left the school were contained in most records. Other information such as parents' occupations, place of residence, parental education levels, and recommendations for college were included for some years, but not for others. Also, individual student's records often were incomplete and the information recorded for any given school year was inconsistent.

Over time, recordkeeping improved at Edwards and student records were more complete; thus, additional information became available regarding the students of

Edwards High School. During the early years of the school, few activities were available to students. Later, during the 1940s and 1950s, the number and variety of activities expanded. Consequently, the level of student participation in extra-curricular activities increased. Additionally, students celebrated holidays and special events throughout the school year, further enriching their high school experience. The information contained in district and student records informs a greater understanding of the students who attended Edwards High.

## **Students of the 1930s**

A limited number of student records exist from the 1930s, but these records provide valuable information regarding the students who attended Edwards High. Most students who attended Edwards High during the 1930s were born and raised in the Gonzales area and attended Edwards for some years of elementary school before entering the high school grades. Whereas some Edwards's students participated in extracurricular activities, most of the students who entered Edwards High during the 1930s graduated from the school.

During the depression years of the 1930s, most students were born in Gonzales or one of the small rural black colonies served by the Gonzales Independent School District. Communities such as Lone Oak, Hoods Point, and Pilgrim Hill were enclaves of black farmers and share croppers homes. A nearby church often doubled as a one room school house during the week. One former Edwards High student told of attending a one room school in the Lone Oak community which operated in a Baptist church (Oral History Interview with Wray Hood 2006). Although most Edwards' students were born in the Gonzales area, a few came to Gonzales from San Antonio or from nearby towns such as Waelder or Nixon. Slightly more female than male students attended high school during

the decade of the 1930s. Fifty four percent of the students who attended Edwards during the 1930s were female and 46% were male. Fourteen was the most common age for students to begin high school, although the ages of students admitted to Edwards High varied greatly. A few students began high school at age twelve. One student was eighteen when admitted to eighth grade. Most students, however, were between the ages of thirteen and sixteen when they enrolled. During the 1930s, Edwards High, like most high schools in Texas, consisted of grades eight through eleven. The majority of Edwards' students attended the school for more than just the high school years. Although relatively few students attended Edwards from grades one through eleven, most attended for some of the elementary grades prior to their entrance into high school.

Most students who entered Edwards High during the 1930s graduated from high school. The graduation rate exceeded 60% during the second half of the 1930s; 50 of the 80 students who entered Edwards High School during the 1930s graduated. These students earned at least 16 credits as required by the local school board and the State Department of Education. Some students, of course, took extra courses and earned 17-18 credits. A few students moved out of the area and several left school during their high school years, but reasons for their departures were not contained in their permanent records. Between 1939 and 1941, school officials sent transcripts for five graduates to one of the historically black college in Texas: Samuel Huston College, Texas College, St. Phillips College, and Prairie View, the state university for blacks.

Table 3.1: 1930s Graduation Data<sup>a</sup>

<b>Year entered Edwards High</b>	<b>Year graduated Edwards High</b>	<b>Total Number of Students in Class</b>	<b>Number of Graduates</b>	<b>Graduation Rate</b>
1935	1939	1	1	100%
1937	1941	15	12	80%
1939	1943	22	11	50%

<sup>a</sup>(Student records of Edwards High School)

Six students' records, three female and three male, noted that they participated in sports. Interestingly, the females all played basketball whereas the males participated in football. Students at Edwards High participated in sports through the Prairie View Interscholastic League, a statewide organization for black students that offered opportunities for participation in athletics, academics, arts, and vocational competitions (*The Prairie View Interscholastic League Collection 2008*). The Prairie View Interscholastic League was the black corollary of the University Interscholastic League that operated for white students in the state.

Student records from the 1930s contained no addresses or information regarding the students' residence. They also contained relatively little information regarding parental occupations. Only one student's records contained a listing for a parent's occupation, likely the parent who registered the child for school. For those whose occupations were listed, the range of jobs held by the parents of Edwards' students varied greatly. Although many fathers worked as farmers and day or common laborers, others worked in barber shops, shoe repair facilities, or in hardware stores. One father of an Edwards High student was listed as an oil and mill worker. Interestingly, one father was

listed as a doctor. Black doctors were few in number during the 1930s and to find a black doctor in a small town such as Gonzales was rare (Chafe, Gavins, and Korstad 2001; Litwack 1998). Most mothers worked as day laborers or as domestic servants such as cooks and maids. The various occupations noted in the student records indicated that a range of businesses existed in Gonzales which employed black adults in the area.

Although existing records from the 1930s are limited, they provide a glimpse of the students who attended Edwards High during the economic turmoil of the 1930s and the years leading to the United States's entry into World War II. The existing records for students who attended Edwards during the ensuing years of the 1940s are incomplete, but illustrate the changes that occurred over time.

### **Students in the 1940s**

Student enrollment at Edwards High fluctuated greatly during the early 1940s, with increasing numbers of students attending high school after the end of World War II. Importantly, Edwards High added a twelfth grade and received state accreditation during the 1940s. Students increasingly participated in extra-curricular activities. They celebrated holidays and special events throughout the year not only with their classmates, but with members of the larger African-American community in Gonzales.

Beginning with the 1940-1941 school year, the twelfth grade was added to Edwards as part of statewide move to increase the length of school attendance. Under this plan high schools expanded from three to four years. Records for students entering high school during that year were few in number; only two students' records remain from those who entered ninth grade in 1940. The Gonzales ISD school board minutes of May 4, 1944, records indicated that two students graduated in 1944, likely the two students who entered Edwards High in the fall of 1940. Current district officials had no

explanation for the scant records from 1940 and 1941. The low number may have been a result of young black males entering wartime military service and others who left school to work on farms or in war-related industries out of the area. Although students entering Edwards in the fall semester of 1940 reasonably should have completed grades 9-12 for graduation in spring of 1944, the first evidence of a student graduating after twelve years of attendance did not appear until 1945. With so few students graduating in 1944, the grade level change likely was not implemented fully until the following year. By the last years of the 1940s, graduation rates increased. After the end of World War II, fewer males left school to enter military service and most chose to remain at Edwards until graduation.

Ten students graduated from Edwards High in May, 1948 (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965). However, student records of only seven students indicated that they completed requirements for graduation. Three additional seniors left Edwards High during the 1947-1948 school year. Two were female students who left when they married and a third student completed less than the 16 credits required for graduation. A definitive reason for the discrepancy between the student records and school board minutes could not be determined. Two possible explanations appear to exist, however. Incomplete record keeping is one distinct possibility. Another explanation may be that the school board noted that ten students attended twelfth grade in 1948 and this figure was reported by the Gonzales ISD board of trustees rather than the number of individuals who actually graduated. Due to the lackadaisical record keeping during this period, the accurate number of graduates for 1948 could not be determined. Despite the incomplete record keeping, evidence indicated that high school graduation rates were lower for students who entered school during World War II than for those who

entered high school following the war. Students entering Edwards High at the end of the 1940s graduated at rates of 70% or higher.

No records were located for students who entered Edwards High in the fall of 1947. During the last years of 1940s, record keeping for Edwards High students appeared to improve slightly. A greater number of student records contained complete information, especially at the end of the decade. Following the State Department of Education report in the spring of 1948, listing improvements that needed to be made at Edwards, record keeping appeared to be one facet of school administration that improved (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965). Still, a 1949 graduate of Edwards High recalled 17 students in her graduating class; however, student records accounted for only 12 graduates that year (Oral History Interview with Wray Hood 2006). School board minutes indicated that nine students graduated from Edwards High in 1952. Student records only accounted for seven of these students. Records of two male students named in the board minutes did not have permanent records files remaining. Records of students graduating the following year failed to validate data contained in the Gonzales ISD school board minutes. Although the board minutes noted that 35 students graduated in May, 1953, student records indicated that 41 students graduated. Some student records may have been lost or misplaced by the district, thus explaining the lower number of graduates that could be counted in later years. However, the number of graduates indicated by student permanent records exceeded the school board figures for other years. Perhaps some students completed high school graduation requirements in the summer and were not counted in the May school board figures. These continual discrepancies indicated a lack of accurate data flowed between Edwards High and the Gonzales ISD district office. Additionally, the safeguarding of Edwards' records in later years was not a school district priority.

Table 3.2: 1940s Graduation Data<sup>a</sup>

<b>Year entered Edwards High</b>	<b>Year graduated Edwards High</b>	<b>Total Number of Students in Class</b>	<b>Number of Graduates</b>	<b>Graduation Rate</b>
1940	1944	3	2	67%
1943	1947	10	3	30%
1946	1950	5	2	40%
1949	1953	45	42	93%

<sup>a</sup>(Student records of Edwards High School)

The male population at Edwards increased ever so slightly (2%) during the 1940s, although the female population continued to exceed that of males. Throughout the decade of the 1940s, 52% of the students attending Edwards High were female and 48% were male. As with the 1930s, most students entered high school during the 1940s between the ages of thirteen and sixteen, with fourteen being the most common age. Student birthdates were not listed for students who entered Edwards High between 1939 and 1941, but were present in the records of most students who entered Edwards High in the fall semester of 1942 or later. Most of these Edwards' students were born the Gonzales area, with only a few relocating from San Antonio or other areas in Texas. Students at the time lived in the town of Gonzales or came from the surrounding communities such as Elm Slough, Lone Oak, Monthalia, or Terryville. The county school system did not support a black high school; thus, rural students who desired a secondary education traveled to Gonzales for their high school years. The only other high school for blacks in Gonzales County was in the town of Waelder and it was considered to be of a

lower quality than was Edwards High (Oral History Interview with Genevieve Vollentine 2007).

Edwards High School received State Department of Education accreditation beginning with the 1947-1948 school year (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965). Accreditation required that students meet the state standards in many areas, including the number of credits required for graduation, in addition to these requirements set by the local school boards. Although the Gonzales ISD school trustees raised the requirement for graduation to 18 credits beginning in 1951, Edwards High students exceeded these minimum credit requirements. All of the schools' graduates earned at least 19.5 credits for graduation, with many earning 20-22 credits. Teachers encouraged students to surpass minimal expectations and they responded by exceeding basic academic requirements. Surprisingly, fewer student records indicated that transcripts were sent to colleges than during the 1930s, even though students earned a greater number of academic credits than had students in earlier years.

In addition to earning more credits, students participated in a wider variety of activities. By the late 1940s, male students played football and basketball. Females participated in pep squad and basketball. Male and female students participated in choral clubs, as well as in short plays and other academic competitions through the Prairie View Interscholastic League. Total student participation in extra-curricular activities could not be determined. However, as student records became more complete at the end of the 1940s, evidence clearly indicated a higher level of student participation in activities than in earlier years. Although Edwards High students participated in a greater number of activities, the local paper failed to report the results of sporting competitions or academic accomplishments of Edwards' students. Rarely an Edwards' sporting event or concert received brief mention in the *Daily Inquirer*. For example, in 1943, the *Daily Inquirer*

reported on events at Edwards High only 10 times throughout the year. The same newspaper printed 166 reports of events and activities at Gonzales High during this same period. The newspaper printed a weekly column titled “GHS Chatter” written by students at Gonzales High School, which discussed school activities and events for the school and for each of the high school grades. Clearly, Edwards High did not receive the attention it deserved.



Illustration 3.2: The Gophers Football Team of 1940 (Photo courtesy of Gonzales Independent School District)

A former student recalled that the school day began with opening exercises that consisted of the pledge of allegiance, a prayer, and the singing of the Negro National Anthem, “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” by James Weldon Johnson. Morning exercises were followed by class periods ranging from 50-60 minutes, with a lunch break at noon. The school operated a hot meal service in the cafeteria, but many students brought their lunch from home. Students who lived in town were permitted to go home for lunch. The school day began at 8:00 am and ended at 3:30 pm, with sports practices after school (Oral History Interview with Winston Fryer 2006). Prior to bus service for Edwards’

students, some few parents picked students up after school hours or students walked home after school. Even after the district provided bus service, the buses only ran in the morning and immediately after the final course offering of the day. Students who participated in after school activities were responsible for their own transportation to their homes. Parents had to provide transportation or the students had to walk home (Oral History Interview with Winston Fryer 2006).

Holiday programs and special events throughout the year enriched the lives of Edwards High students and parents. Interestingly, Edwards' alumni acknowledged that the school had a parent teacher organization, but none remembered that their parents participated in that group, nor spent much time at the school except for attendance at sports and special occasions. This parental presence in the school was not surprising as parents of this era generally did not invite themselves into the school. Siddle Walker noted that for a parent to be present during the school day would have been considered an interruption in learning (1996). The Edwards High PTA did raise money for some needed school equipment and supplies for students whose parents could not afford to provide supplies for their own children (Oral History Interview with Winston Fryer 2006). Former students recalled that they attended square dances, Halloween programs, Valentines celebrations, and annual Christmas programs. Graduation was the highlight of the year. A baccalaureate service was held at a local church. This service was followed by a commencement ceremony at the school a few days later. During commencement a guest speaker spoke to the graduates, the valedictorian, salutatorian, and class president delivered speeches, and the chorus provided music. The class of 1950 was the first class to hold its commencement ceremonies in the Edwards' gymnasium (Oral History Interview with Florence Fryer 2007; Oral History Interview with Winston Fryer 2006; Oral History Interview with Wray Hood 2006).

Although the completeness of student records improved during the late 1940s, fewer records listed parents' occupations than did records from earlier years. Some new occupations, however, appeared on student records from the 1940s. In addition to being farmers and laborers, fathers were noted to be hotel porters, ministers, and barbers. A greater number of females were listed as common laborers than during the 1930s and many mothers listed "Service" listed as their occupation. Given the time period, these women presumably would have been engaged in domestic service, working as cooks and housekeepers for white families in Gonzales. As during the 1930s, only one parent's occupation was listed on students' records.

By the end of the 1940s, student enrollment at Edwards High increased significantly from the beginning of the decade. Edwards High received accreditation in 1947, elevating the school's status. The number of extra-curricular activities for students increased during the 1940s and would continue to do so during the coming decade. Students who attended Edwards during the latter years of the 1940s watched excitedly as a new gymnasium was constructed on the school's grounds. However, it would be the students of the 1950s who benefited from the new facility.

## **Students of the 1950s**

Students who entered Edwards High during the 1950s witnessed many changes during their time at the school. Many of these students attended elementary school at Edwards, but were sent to Riverside for middle school before returning to Edwards for their high school years. Standardized testing became commonplace during the 1950s. Students increasingly participated in a wide variety of extra-curricular activities and utilized a new gymnasium.

As in previous decades, more females than males attended Edwards High, with 55% of the population being female and 45% being male. A larger number of students lived in rural areas surrounding Gonzales than lived in town. For students who entered high school during the early 1950s, graduation rates fluctuated between 49% and 67%. Student records noted students who graduated from Edwards, as well as those who moved out of the area, dropped out of school, were inducted into the military, or were dismissed from school. During the 1950s, students attended Riverside School for the middle school years, even if they had attended Edwards for the elementary grades. Prior to this time, no student records mentioned Riverside. All students then attended Edwards High for grades 9-12. Missing student records continued to hinder verification of graduation rates. For example, students who entered Edwards High in the fall semester of 1957 graduated in May, 1961. Gonzales ISD school board minutes listed the names of 35 graduates from Edwards High in 1961. However, student records accounted for only 33 students who graduated. The other two students had no existing records on file with the district. For students who entered high school during the 1950s, the number of graduates was much was much higher than in previous years, reaching an apex with the freshman class that entered Edwards High in the fall of 1955 and graduated in 1959 with 37 graduates.

Table 3.3: 1950s Graduation Data<sup>a</sup>

<b>Year entered Edwards High</b>	<b>Year graduated Edwards High</b>	<b>Total Number of Students in Class</b>	<b>Number of Graduates</b>	<b>Graduation Rate</b>
1950	1954	24	16	67%
1953	1957	39	26	67%
1956	1960	27	21	78%
1959	1963	29	28	97%

<sup>a</sup>(Student records of Edwards High School)

### STANDARDIZED TESTING

Standardized testing began during the 1950s at Edwards High School and continued until the school's closing in 1965. The tests ranged from IQ tests to career interest surveys. Although the nature of the standardized testing changed over time, standardized testing became firmly established into the structure of Edwards High.

Edwards High administered standardized mental ability tests beginning in 1952. The Terman McNemar test was given to students; subsequently, test scores and IQs were entered into the students' permanent records. The test, designed by Stanford professor Lewis Terman and his student, Quinn McNemar measured the "intelligence" of children (*Lewis Terman 2007*).<sup>13</sup> The average IQ score was determined to be 100. Prior to 1960, 16 was the age when educational psychologists believed that mental ability stopped increasing; thus, 16 was the most common age for administering the test. The practical application of the IQ test was to determine the educability of students. Jensen stated that students with an IQ less than 74 could not complete elementary school, but those with an

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<sup>13</sup> Lewis Terman was a follower of eugenics. Even after World War II when other followers of eugenics recanted their positions, Terman never did (*Lewis Terman 2007*).

IQ greater than 74 were capable of doing the necessary work (Jensen as cited in *Definition of IQ*). Conversely, individuals with an IQ between 89 and 111 were able to attend and probably graduate from high school (*Definition of IQ*). The IQ test gained prominence during World War I as a screening tool for military inductees and widely was applied to the civilian sector following the war, especially in education. The Terman McNemar test was used at Edwards between 1952 and 1955. During those years, Edwards High students' scores ranged from a low of 67 to a high of 143. To be sure, not all students' records contained IQ scores. For students with scores listed, 40% of the students scored within the 74-88 range, indicating that, according to Jensen, they were capable of completing high school (Jensen as cited in *Definition of IQ*). An additional 25% of the students scored between 89 and 100, indicating the potential for high school graduation and college attendance. Most students who scored 90 or greater on the Terman McNemar test were recommended for college, indicating the importance placed upon the test by the school and the district. The only exceptions to this trend were one student who applied to Texas Southern University with an IQ of 85 and one student who was listed as having an IQ of 108 who appeared not to have applied to an institution of higher education. Seven percent of the tested students' scores indicated that they were capable of attaining Bachelors degrees and advanced academic degrees. Although, 28% of the students scored below the 74 point threshold, labeling them as unable to complete high school, many of these students completed graduation requirements and earned a diploma from Edwards High.<sup>14</sup>

Edwards High discontinued the use of the Terman McNemar intelligence test in 1955. No standardized tests were listed on the transcripts of students who entered Edwards in 1956. However, the class that entered Edwards High in 1957 endured a new

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<sup>14</sup> For additional information on eugenics and IQ testing see *Measuring Head and Calibrating Minds: The Dark Legacy of Eugenics in American Intelligence Testing* (Masear 2004,168).

battery of standardized testing. Unlike the mental ability tests that the district used in previous years, students completed occupational interest surveys in addition to aptitude tests in algebra, English, and chemistry. Beginning in 1957, students completed the Kuder Preference Record. This instrument presumed to measure students' levels of interest in ten occupational areas and was designed by the American psychologist George Frederic Kuder (Kuder Preference Record 2001). Additionally, Edwards' students sat for the California Algebra Aptitude Test, the Anderson Chemistry Test, the Cross English Test, and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. The algebra, English, and chemistry tests measured students learning in the given subject areas. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills was a general achievement test that measured students' learning in a variety of subjects and was nationally normed. Students sat for the California Algebra Aptitude Test during their freshman year, the Kuder Preference Record in their sophomore year, and the Anderson Chemistry Test, The Cross English Test, and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills during their senior year.

In 1958, the district added the Flanagan Aptitude Test. This test was administered only in 1958. The instrument was designed by Dr. John C. Flanagan, a psychologist who designed tests for pilots during World War II. The Flanagan test was administered over the course of two days and sought to measure what students liked to do and how much individual instruction and guidance they were receiving in school (John Flanagan, 90, Psychologist Who Devised Pilot Aptitude Test 2008). Edwards High discontinued the Kuder Preference Record, Anderson Chemistry Test, and the Cross English Test in 1959.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> For addition information regarding standardized tests, see *The Seventeenth Mental Measurement Yearbook* (Spies et al. 2007).

## **STUDENT LIFE**

During the 1940s many students participated in extra-curricular activities. This trend continued into the 1950s. Throughout the decades, the number and variety of activities available to students expanded. Students had the opportunity to participate in academic, athletic, music, and vocational competitions. Additionally, students celebrated special occasions throughout the year (e.g. homecoming, prom, holidays), with graduation being the culmination of a student's high school career.

Beginning in the 1950s, students participated in a wider variety of activities than had been available in previous decades. Sports teams and student organizations ranged in size from only a few students on the tennis teams to nearly 60 students in the choral club. Sports such as football, basketball, baseball, and tennis were offered for boys. In 1950, students began playing basketball in a newly completed gymnasium. Prior to 1950, boys and girls had practiced and competed on a sandlot court on the school grounds. With the addition of the gymnasium, Edwards' students fared better against other schools who previously had practiced in gymnasiums (Oral History Interview with Winston Fryer 2006). The 1951 boy's track team won the district championship. Boys who earned athletic letters joined the "G" Club. Hi-Y clubs promoted community service and were open only to boys with a corresponding group for girls, called Tri-Hi-Y.<sup>16</sup> Girls participated in busy bee club, pep squad, track, and basketball, with the 1951 basketball team winning the district championship. Both boys and girls participated in academic clubs, student council, dramatics, band, and chorus. Although the band was open to boys and girls, only girls marched as the majorettes and performed with the band. Vocational clubs enrolled many students and often won awards in the annual Prairie View

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<sup>16</sup> Hi-Y was founded by the YMCA youth organization in 1912 for males only. During the 1930s, all female clubs, Tri-Hi-Y, were added (*Hi-Y Club* 2007).

Interscholastic League competitions. Males joined the New Farmers of America (NFA). NFA was an organization for African-American males founded in 1935 which promoted the importance of vocational, social, and recreational life (Wakefield and Talbert 2000, 420-433). The NFA operated in parallel with the Future Farmers of America organization for white students.<sup>17</sup> Females joined the New Homemakers of America, the corollary to the Future Homemakers of America for white students. In 1951, the sophomore class published *The Gopher*, the school's first yearbook. This volume contained faculty and students pictures, classroom photos, photos of student sports teams and organizations, and pictures of the homecoming court. Local businesses, black and white, sponsored the project by purchasing advertising space in the yearbook.



Illustration 3.3: Choral Club of Edwards High School 1951 (Photo courtesy of Gonzales Independent School District)

Student life at Edwards High consisted of academics and extra-curricular activities, as well as special events throughout the year. Several former students fondly recalled the annual Christmas program in which students at each grade level performed and parents attended the event to see their children. Homecoming in the fall included a competition for homecoming queen and for "favorite" awards. The two "favorite" awards for girls were for "Prettiest and Most Popular" and "Best Girl Athlete;" for boys, the

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<sup>17</sup> The NFA and the FFA merged in 1965 (Wakefield and Talbert 2000, 420-433).

awards were for “Most Handsome and Most Popular” and “Best Male Athlete.” At homecoming, the school’s alumni returned to cheer for the gophers and sing their alma mater again:

O Edwards High School, how we love you,  
Thy sons and daughters always will be true  
Our aims, our thoughts, thy memories dear,  
We’ll strive to be great all through the years.

Our colors true we’ll always cheer,  
Our lessons learned how we hold so dear,  
Our friends, our teachers, always be near,  
Give three cheers, for our school Edwards, Edwards, Edwards High (Alma Mater  
of Edwards School).

Prom was an annual event for seniors. Often Edwards students invited someone from a black high school in surrounding areas to attend the Edwards prom such that they, in turn, might attend the other school’s prom (Oral History Interview with Florence Fryer 2007). In addition to the annual prom, Edwards High sponsored socials and dances on evenings after the football games.



Illustration 3.4: New Homemakers Club of Edwards High School 1951 (Photo courtesy of Gonzales Independent School District)

Despite the increase in student activities, the *Daily Inquirer* ignored most of these events as they had in previous years. During the month of February in 1950, the *Daily Inquirer* published fourteen articles related to Gonzales High School. These articles

informed readers of sporting events, arts performances, and academic competitions in which the school's students were participating. During this same month, the newspaper mentioned Edwards High only four times. Each report was related to basketball at Edwards. The paper failed to report any other activities or events at the school.

As in previous years, graduation was the culmination of students' education and a cause for celebration. During the early 1950s, commencement ceremonies took place in the Edwards High gymnasium during the week and a baccalaureate service was held at a local church on Sunday. By the late 1950s, baccalaureate and commencement exercises were held in the Edwards gymnasium.

In 1958, the baccalaureate service occurred on Sunday evening, May 25. Three local ministers presided. On Wednesday, May 28, Edwards High conducted commencement exercises. Three students delivered addresses and the class valedictorian served as the Mistress of Ceremonies. Members of the senior class provided music throughout the ceremony, including a vocal duet, a piano solo, and trumpet solos. The conferring of diplomas and awards followed the speeches and music. The commencement ended when the graduating class finished singing its class song and reciting the alumni pledge, "We, the alumni of Edwards Senior School, pledge ourselves to uphold the principles and ideals for which she stands, and to move forward with our Alma Mater in the vanguard of educational, cultural, and economic progress" (Commencement Exercises Edwards Senior School 1958). Each senior class selected a class motto and a class flower. The graduating class of 1958 selected "Above the Heaviest Clouds Is Always the Sun" for the class motto and the white carnation served as the class flower (Commencement Exercises Edwards Senior School 1958). One former student recalled

the yellow cap and gown she wore and the wonderful party at the school following the commencement ceremony, complete with banners and food. Each graduate's name was placed on a table and well wishers placed graduation gifts on the appropriate tables. Graduates were expected to record the gifts they received and send thank you notes to those who had shared in their celebration (Oral History Interview with Ella Harris 2007).

The students who attended Edwards during the 1950s witnessed several changes at the school. They attended Riverside for the middle school years, endured numerous standardized tests, and enjoyed a new gymnasium. Although the Supreme Court rendered the *Brown* decision in 1954, Edwards High students experienced little change as a result of the Court's decision. The same would not be true for the students who were to attend Edwards during the 1960s. Desegregation was to influence their high school experiences greatly.

## **Students of the 1960s**

The decade of the 1960s was a difficult time for many Edwards High students. Throughout Texas and the American South, successful lawsuits challenging racial segregation resulted in the closing of black high schools. Despite the fact that no local legal actions forced desegregation in Gonzales schools, the Gonzales Independent School District board decided to integrate the district's black high school students with its white high school students. The district desegregated the middle schools and high schools first, followed by the elementary grades. In all instances, the schools that enrolled only African-American students were closed and black students were assigned to formerly all-white schools.

Females continued to outnumber males at Edwards High. From 1960 until the school was closed in 1965, 54% of students were female and 46% were males. During these years, data on students' place of birth was not collected. Student records listed Texas or US as the birthplace for all students, rather than the county in which the students were born, as had been done in previous years. A slightly higher percentage of Edwards' students lived in rural areas than in the town of Gonzales. Fourteen was the age when almost all students entered Edwards High during the 1960s. A few students entered Edwards between the ages of 13 and 15, but no students entered high school after the age of 15 as had students during the 1950s. During the 1950s, students began high school studies as young as 11 or as old as 18.

Beginning in 1962, the number of student records that noted graduation concurred with totals noted in school board minutes. The improvement in record keeping within the district permitted verification of graduation numbers. Despite the fact that school board minutes and a few existing course grade records indicated desegregation began with the fall semester of 1965, student records from the May 1965 graduates of Edwards High were not housed with other Edwards High records. Current district officials were unable to determine if the 1965 records were combined with those from Gonzales High School, lost, or were misplaced.

More students who entered Edwards High School during the 1960s graduated from the institution than had students in previous decades. The graduating class of 1961 posted the lowest graduation rate of the 1960s, with 33 of 41 students (80%) completing graduation requirements. By 1963, 27 of 28 students (96%) who entered Edwards High in 1959 graduated. Again in 1964 and 1965, Edwards' students boasted a graduation rate

above 90%. This high rate of graduation was a dramatic increase from the class of 1955's 60% graduation rate only 10 years earlier. Surprisingly, student records did not indicate higher college attendance rates among the graduating classes of the early 1960s. Only 16% of the 1964 graduates' records noted that transcripts had been sent to institutions of higher learning. This low figure likely indicates that few students of this class attended college. The low figure also may have been due to the fact that no entries were made when students' transcripts were mailed. Students who went on to higher education attended schools for technical training, such as Massey College of Business, or one of the historically black colleges and universities in Texas, such as St. Phillips College or Prairie View State University.

Standardized testing continued for Edwards High students continued during the 1960s. The California Algebra Aptitude Test was administered to students in the ninth grade. Beginning in 1960, the Preliminary Standard Achievement Test (PSAT) was administered to ninth grade students and a multiple aptitude test was administered in the eleventh grade to measure student achievement in a variety of subjects.

Parents' occupations during the 1960s differed little from those noted in earlier decades. Most fathers continued to be listed as farmers or laborers. However, some fathers were noted to be ministers, mail carriers, mechanics, service station attendants, butchers, or carpenters. The most common occupation for mothers of Edwards High students was that of housewife. Those mothers who worked outside the home predominantly worked as maids or domestic workers. A very few mothers served as nurses aides, or teachers. No information regarding parents' levels of education was noted on student records from the 1960s.

Extra-curricular activities continued to play an important role in the life of Edwards' students. The "G" club for lettermen was renamed the "E" club and cheerleading and a drill team for girls were added to the roster of available activities. A baseball team was organized for boys. An honor society recognized outstanding academic achievement, although student records failed to indicate the specific honor society. Typing was added as to the list of Interscholastic League competitions entered by Edwards' students. Public speaking was promoted at Edwards, especially in extra curricular activities. Students excelling in debate were a source of pride for the school. In 1961, two students were noted to have excelled in debate, placing first and second at the Interscholastic League district competitions. Additionally, class officers were recognized for their leadership and their offices were listed on their permanent records for the first time. Most students during the 1960s participated in several extra-curricular activities.

The highlight of the year continued to be the end of the year festivities surrounding the graduation of senior students. On May 18, 1962, the graduating class of Edwards High presented a Class Day Program to other students in the school. The program was held in the gymnasium during the week prior to graduation. Seniors presented their class song, "Now Is the Hour," and class history. During the presentation of the class will, seniors bequeathed mementos and special memories to underclassmen. A member of the graduating class delivered the class prophecy, predicting the futures of other class members. Following the recitation of the class poem and closing remarks by the principal, the seniors recessed to prepare for their final week as Edwards High students (Class Day Program 1962).

Two days later, on Sunday, May 20, the baccalaureate service for Edwards Senior School was held in the gymnasium. As in previous years, local pastors delivered the invocation, scripture reading, sermon, and benediction (Edwards Senior School Baccalaureate Services 1962). The following Friday, May 25, 1962, seniors celebrated commencement exercises at Apache Field. The 31 members of the graduating class and commencement attendees listened to speeches from their class president and three classmates designated as honor students. The senior choral club entertained attendees with a spiritual and A.O. Bird, the Gonzales ISD superintendent, presented diplomas to the graduates (Edwards Senior School Graduation Exercises 1962).

Sadly, students from Edwards High who integrated into Gonzales High School in the fall of 1965 lost the opportunity to participate in extra-curricular activities. Many students throughout the state suffered a similar fate when African-American schools were closed and students sent to previously all white institutions (Robinson 1978; Blount 1993,409-413). An examination of *Lexington*, the yearbook of the newly desegregated Gonzales High School, published in the spring of 1967 revealed that no former Edwards High students served as class officers, were voted onto the Homecoming Court, received academic honors, served on Student Council, or were selected by their peers for “favorites” honors. No black students were elected cheerleaders or majorettes, nor did any participate in the Future Science Club despite the fact that Edwards High had hosted a large science club. Only two of the twenty-nine football lettermen at Gonzales High School were former Edwards High students. Only one black student participated in football and only one boy was on the basketball team. Former Edwards High students were represented, however, in the Future Farmers of America and the Junior Future

Homemakers of America clubs. The choir was the only organization in which administrators encouraged black students to participate at Gonzales High. Although black students were not welcomed into the existing Gonzales High choir, the school opened a separate choir for the former Edwards High students. This separate choir was the only real opportunity for blacks to participate in extra curricular activities with their friends and former classmates (*Lexington* 1967).

Blacks were welcomed into extra-curricular activities at Gonzales High School only very slowly. The greatest gains were made initially in sports and vocational organizations. Not until 1972, six years after desegregation, did *The Lexington* yearbook reveal that black students were elected to the Homecoming Court or into honor societies (*Lexington* 1972). Edwards' students lost a valuable part of the high school experience when Edwards High closed. Not only had former Edwards' students lost the ability to participate in extra-curricular activities, but they also lost a sense of identity with desegregation. Desegregation often caused students to lose their pride and self esteem (Foster 1997). As students of Gonzales High, black students were forced to discard the familiar gopher mascot that they had known for so many years and to adopt the Apache mascot. As few teachers and no coaches from Edwards joined the faculty at Gonzales High, students also lost the familiar faces that had encouraged their growth and development outside of the classroom.

Students who graduated from Edwards High during the early 1960s earned higher numbers of credits than had any students in Edwards' history and continued participation in a wide variety of extra-curricular activities. Graduation was the culmination of a student's high school career and the graduation of 1965 held special significance. The

students who graduated in 1965 were the last to complete their high school requirements at Edwards High School. The desegregation of Gonzales' high schools meant the closing of Edwards High. Although the students who were desegregated into Gonzales High gained access to new educational resources, they lost many opportunities to participate in enrichment and extra-curricular activities which had been an integral part of their Edwards' experience.

## **Summary and Conclusions**

Students at Edwards High experienced many changes during the school's operation. Originally a three year high school, Edwards became a four-year high school and received state accreditation during the 1940s. Student enrollment fluctuated over time at Edwards High, increasing more rapidly after World War II. Additionally, students increasingly participated in a wide variety of activities. Students participated in athletic, academic, musical, and vocational activities offered by the school. When the district desegregated the town's high schools, Edwards High was closed and the black students were sent to Gonzales High School where they lost the opportunity to participate in the extra-curricular activities which had enriched their high school experience at Edwards.

Although student records highlighted many of the changes and accomplishments of the school's students, they also raised questions. Why was information gleaned from student records discrepant with the data reported in the Gonzales ISD school board minutes? Why was the reason for a student's withdrawal from school not recorded on the student's permanent record in many instances? Why did the district fail to disaggregate enrollment data by grade level divisions for black students but not for white students? How did officials use the information gathered on standardized tests?

Information contained in student records informs a greater understanding of the students who attended Edwards High School. Interestingly, the information gleaned from the records often conflicted with data reported in the Gonzales ISD school board minutes. The number of students who graduated from the district's two high schools, Edwards High and Gonzales High, were noted in the school board minutes for most years. However, the numbers reported in the board's meeting minutes could not be corroborated by student records. Generally the number of Edwards' graduating seniors was higher in the board minutes than the number gathered from students' records. Possibly, some student records were misplaced or lost. Likely, the superintendent noted the number of students in the senior class and reported these students as graduates, regardless of whether students had earned the required number of credits for graduation. Obviously, the Gonzales ISD board of trustees was little concerned with the actual number of students who graduated from Edwards High. The board's disregard for Edwards' students is not surprising since this same board afforded Edwards an inequitable share of district resources and provided second-hand materials for the school. Also, Edwards High teachers and administrators had little to gain by reporting the lower, but correct, numbers. If board members knew that fewer students graduated from Edwards than they believed had graduated, then district officials might exercise greater oversight at the school. Edwards' teachers and principals did not relish additional visits by district officials. These district personnel acted condescendingly towards the Edwards' faculty and administration (e.g. walking into classrooms at will, addressing teachers by their first name and reprimanding them in front of their classes) (Oral History Interview with Wray Hood 2006; Oral History Interview with Rita Hendershot 2006).

Existing records note that many students withdrew from school, leaving Edwards High prior to graduation. The records often failed to note the reason for a student's

withdrawal. Students' records indicated a general lack of quality recordkeeping at the school. Reasonably, student records were housed at Edwards High and sent to the district office only after students had graduated or left the district. When the records reached the district office, district officials may have perused the documents. Edwards High faculty and administrators may not have wanted others, specifically whites, to know the reasons for the student withdrawals if they were the result of untoward behavior (e.g. incarceration, pregnancy).

Although the enrollment at the Edwards School increased over time, the exact enrollment of the high school is uncertain. The school district consistently reported the enrollment of Gonzales High School but listed the total enrollment for the elementary and secondary divisions of Edwards as a single figure. In later years, all black students attending school in Gonzales ISD were listed together, even though Edwards High, Edwards Elementary, and Riverside School all enrolled black students. Likely, the board was not concerned with the disaggregated data.

Standardized testing was implemented at Edwards High during the 1950s. Test scores and IQ scores were recorded on students' permanent records. The tests given to students changed over time. Initially students took mental ability tests. Later the district administered career preference inventories. Finally, students completed general and subject specific achievement tests. Neither student records nor Gonzales ISD board minutes indicated the uses of the tests. Interestingly, during the years that students took IQ tests, the only students who were recommended for college were those whose scores indicated they were capable of college level work. Surprisingly, many students whose scores indicated that they were incapable of completing high school completed the graduation requirements at Edwards and received a high school diploma. Supporters of eugenics believed intelligence testing proved the inferiority of the "colored" races.

Eugenacists considered intelligence testing crucial for preventing racial mixing, which they believed was leading to a rapid decline in American society (Masear 2004,168). After eugenics receded from popularity following World War II, many individuals continued to subscribe to its beliefs. Reasonably, many in the South accepted eugenics because it was congruent with prevailing white southern attitudes about blacks. Possibly, Gonzales ISD officials utilized the intelligence testing as a means of justifying the disbursement of greater funds to the white schools of the district. If board members believed that lower IQ scores for black students indicated that they did not require the same education as did white students, then the board would be justified in appropriating black schools less of the district's resources.

Although student and district records raised many questions about the students who attended Edwards High, they also highlighted the many accomplishments of students, as well as the changes experienced by students over time. At Edwards High, students studied a traditional academic curriculum, participated in extra-curricular activities, celebrated holidays and special occasions, and experienced a meaningful high school career.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **“THEY MADE SURE WE LEARNED”**



Illustration 4.1: Isaac S. Spencer, Edwards High School Principal 1950  
(Photo courtesy of Gonzales Independent School District)

As depicted by Siddle Walker, the African-American teachers who staffed the black schools of the South were caring individuals who worked with their leaders to implement a vision of education for African-American youth in a Jim Crow society (2001, 751-779). Further, these teachers understood the role that education would play in the advancement of blacks when the barriers of segregation were eliminated. At the turn of the century, Southern black and white teachers received little training to undertake their positions. By the early 1920s, black teachers' education and salaries lagged far behind those of white teachers. Although educational and certification levels rose for blacks during the 1920s, their salaries remained paltry. Fultz noted that levels of teacher preparation and salaries were positively correlated with the size of the community in which they taught (1995, 544-568). During the 1940s, blacks achieved parity with whites

in educational preparation, but not until the equalization movement of the late 1940s and 1950s did black teachers earn salaries comparable to their white counterparts. Black teachers who earned degrees in Texas likely attended one of seven private institutions of higher education open to blacks during this era. Only one public institution, Prairie View Agricultural and Mechanical College, provided black teachers with an education beyond the high school level. Many black Texas teachers seeking advanced studies prior to 1964, attended universities outside of the state because no all white in-state institutions offered African-Americans the opportunity for postgraduate study.

## **Texas Teachers**

### **EDUCATION, CERTIFICATION, AND SALARIES**

At the turn of the twentieth century few teachers in Texas, as in much of the American South, possessed a high school diploma. To improve the quality of teachers in Texas' schools, the state offered Summer Normal institutes. These sessions enhanced teachers' pedagogical and subject area knowledge. During the 1920's the state made a concerted effort to raise the quality of teachers in Texas' public schools. During this period, white males teaching in independent school districts were the highest paid teachers and black females teaching in the state's common schools earned the lowest salaries. By 1945, nearly 70% of all teachers in Texas had earned college degrees (State Department of Education 1947). In 1949, the Texas Legislature passed the Gilmer-Aiken laws equalizing salaries between elementary and high school teachers and between black and white teachers. In 1955, the Texas Legislature reformed teacher certification yet again, establishing provisional and professional certificates. By 1957, almost all teachers in Texas held at least a bachelor's degrees and earned salaries which adhered to standards set by the State Department of Education.

Prior to 1920, the majority of teachers were prepared by the nation's public high schools. As the demand for teachers exceeded supply, most southern states did not require high school graduation to obtain a teaching certificate (Fultz 1995,196-210). Teaching certificates in Texas were issued by the state or by a county following an examination in the required subjects, generally those subjects that teachers were expected to teach in schools. Teachers initially earned certificates in one of three categories, with first class being the highest certificate and third class being the lowest certification level. During the 1900-1901 school year, black teachers comprised 20% of Texas' teaching force, but possessed relatively few first class teaching certificates. Teachers with higher levels of certification commanded higher salaries. Salaries also were dependent upon race, gender, and grade level taught. High school teachers earned higher wages than did elementary teachers; men earned more than did women; and whites earned more than did blacks. Additionally, teachers in independent school districts, usually located in towns and cities, received higher wages than did teachers in common school districts, generally in rural areas. During the early years of the 1900s, black males earned higher salaries than did white females; however, by 1915, white females were paid higher wages than black males (State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1906, 1917). This trend continued until the equalization of salaries in the late 1940s and in many cases, beyond. Later, the State Department of Education authorized other types of certifications (e.g. permanent, high school, kindergarten) and educational requirements for certification increased.

The poor quality of teachers in 1910, black and white, was of great concern to F.M. Bralley, State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Bralley stated that although the supply of teachers appeared ample, the preparation and fitness of the teaching staff needed to be considered. Bralley reminded the State Board of Education:

Remember that the requirements for a third-grade certificate are about equal to the requirements of the fifth grade in a first-class system of city public schools, that the requirements for a second-grade certificate are about equal to the requirements of the seventh grade, and that the requirements for a first-grade certificate are not at all equal to the requirements for graduation from a reputable public high school in this State (State Department of Education 1911, 14-15).

Bralley's comments indicated that teachers in many of Texas' black schools held little more than an elementary education. As of 1910, only 36% of all teachers in Texas' public schools possessed at least a secondary education. Roughly 75% of the black teachers and 59% of the white teachers did not possess a high school diploma (State Department of Education 1911). Teachers knew little of pedagogical methods of the day, and often did not have a basic understanding of subject area content. Not surprising, therefore, the many students who chose to attend college often had to complete one or more years in an institution's preparatory division before they could begin college level courses.

To improve the quality of the state's teaching force, Texas initiated teacher institutes. Texas ran several different systems of institutes simultaneously: summer normal institutes, county institutes, and city/local institutes (Morowski and Spearman 2008). These professional development courses focused on academic and professional training for teachers. At the end of the institute's term, participants were examined in subject matter and pedagogy to obtain initial teaching certificates or to garner a higher level certificate.

During the summer of 1910, Texas sponsored 73 institutes for white teachers and 43 institutes for African-American teachers throughout the state. Nearly 3,000 black teachers attended the training, but only 15% of those who attended the Summer Normals garnered original or higher level teaching credentials. Dismal as the statistics appeared, the results for white teachers were better only somewhat. A mere 30% of white teachers

who attended Summer Normals obtained certificates. A state report noted that although the work completed at the summer institutes had not reached the desired standard, teachers attended because they had little other opportunity to improve their teaching (State Department of Education 1911).

Other teachers attended one of the private colleges or the state's only normal school open to blacks, Prairie View.<sup>18</sup> Teachers attending normal schools or colleges garnered teaching certificates; the certificate level was based on the amount of coursework the teacher had completed. Between 1918 and 1922, colleges and normal schools issued predominantly first grade or permanent certificates (State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1922). In 1918, Birdie Gilmore Harris, a young female student from Waelder, Texas, entered Prairie View Agricultural and Mechanical College to earn a teaching certificate.<sup>19</sup> This future teacher completed the required preparatory work and entered the junior normal courses for teachers. Junior normal coursework consisted of general chemistry, European history, psychology, plane geometry, and American literature. Passing all of the junior courses, the student continued to the senior normal classes. The prospective teacher studied advanced physics, rhetoric, history of education, solid geometry, advanced algebra, plane trigonometry, industry, formal grammar, English literature, and pedagogy. The young lady graduated from the normal program and continued her education at Guadalupe College in Seguin, Texas. Eventually, the teacher went on to earn a bachelor's degree from Tillotson College in 1949 and a Master of Education degree from Prairie View in 1959 (Student Transcript 1918).

By the 1920-21 school year, black and white teachers in Texas had achieved higher levels education and of certification. The number of teachers who did not possess

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<sup>18</sup> Many normal schools through out the South became teachers colleges in the 1920s and 1930s, eventually becoming state universities (Ogren 2005).

<sup>19</sup> Waelder is located in Gonzales County approximately 10 miles from the town of Gonzales.

a high school diploma dropped dramatically. Only 33% of the state's black teaching force lacked a high school diploma, down from 75% in 1910. Likewise, 26% of white teachers had no high school degree, down from 59% only 10 years earlier. Thirty-three percent of white teachers earned less than a first grade certificate in 1920, compared to 78% in 1910. Similarly, only 46% of black teachers held less than first grade certification in 1920 compared to 71% in 1910 (State Department of Education 1923). Additionally, a higher percentage of black teachers possessed permanent certifications in 1920 (State Department of Education 1921).

Teachers who wished to obtain or to enhance a current teaching certificate continued to attend a Summer Normal. During the summer of 1920, the state conducted 25 Summer Normal Institutes for white teachers and 14 for black teachers throughout the state. Prior to attending the institute, a teacher was required to have completed the seventh grade or to hold a current second class teaching certificate. During the institute, participants received instruction in pedagogy and subject content. At the end of the term, participants sat for exams to earn or upgrade a teaching certificate. To earn a second grade certificate, teachers were examined in spelling, reading, writing, arithmetic, English grammar, geography, Texas history, physiology and hygiene, school management, methods of teaching, U.S. history, and elementary agriculture. Individuals wishing to obtain first grade certificates were tested on English composition, civil government, algebra, physical geography, geometry, and general history, in addition to all subjects tested at the second grade certificate level. State permanent certificate seekers were examined in all subjects prescribed for second and first grade certificates and in the history of education, psychology, English and American literature, chemistry, solid geometry, physics, plane trigonometry, and elementary double-entry bookkeeping (State Department of Education 1920).

During 1920, salaries followed the trends established during the preceding twenty years. White males teaching in high schools in independent school districts continued to earn the highest salaries. White females continued to receive higher wages than African-American males and African-American females' average earnings were approximately half those paid to white males in comparable school districts.

Table 4.1: Average Annual Salaries of High School Teachers in 1920<sup>a</sup>

	<b>Independent School Districts</b>	<b>Common School Districts</b>
<b>White Males</b>	\$1281	\$845
<b>Black Males</b>	\$ 708	\$531
<b>White Females</b>	\$ 989	\$718
<b>Black Females</b>	\$ 633	\$496

<sup>a</sup>(State Department of Education 1921)

The disparity in salaries between white and black teachers occurred throughout Texas and the South during this era (Pierce et al. 1955; Bullock 1967; Fultz 1995, 544-568; McCuistion 1932, 16-24). Litwack noted that black teachers in South Carolina in the early years of the 1900s earned \$50 per month less than white teachers (1998). Phillips found that during the 1930s, black teachers in the South were paid 51%-63% of a white teacher's salary (1940, 482-497). Black teachers in Georgia earned 60-75% of a white teacher's salary by 1940, even after the state had implemented a minimum salary schedule for teachers (Siddle Walker 2001, 751-779). A study of teachers' salaries during the 1940s found that the situation changed little during this period (Boykin 1949, 40-47). Salaries for black teachers trailed those of white teachers until equalization laws forced equity in local districts.

Texas, like much of the South, focused on improving teacher quality throughout the 1920s. Texas raised the quality of the teaching force during the 1920s through a coordinated effort of increased educational spending and by raising the standards for teacher certification. The Better Schools Amendment, enacted by the Texas Legislature in 1920, removed the local tax limit that districts could levy to support schools. Local taxation increased by 51% between the years of 1918 and 1922. Although taxation increased, no evidence exists to confirm that these funds directly aided institutions preparing black teachers. Additionally, the age for obtaining a teaching certification was raised from 16 to 18 years of age (State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1922). The state focused greater attention on rural schools in an effort to improve educational quality. By 1929, the State Board of Education required three fourths of a high school's teachers be college graduates in order for the school to be classified as a first class high school. Further, state officials encouraged local school boards to hire only college graduates. One difficulty with the new requirement was the dearth of degree granting state teachers colleges and normal schools, especially for blacks (Colson 1933, 284-298). Texas also set minimum salary levels for teachers in classified schools (State Department of Education 1929). As the demand for teachers exceeded the supply, districts with higher salaries and greater resources, normally in the cities, hired the more qualified teachers.

The increased level of higher education attained by teachers was common throughout the South during the 1920s (Brundage 2005). By 1931, black and white teachers achieved near parity in educational achievement and certification levels, notwithstanding the quality of instruction and offerings in the Texas colleges for blacks and whites. A slightly higher percentage of white teachers were college graduates than were black teachers. However, more than 90% of black and white teachers attended college for

at least one year. More than 50% of teachers of both races earned permanent teaching credentials and fewer than 10% possessed second class certificates. High school teachers attained greater levels of education than did elementary teachers, likely because greater content knowledge was required to teach high school subjects. More than half of the high school teachers in Texas held college degrees and more than 95% had attended college for at least one year by 1931 (State Department of Education *The Twenty-Seventh Biennial Report* 1933).

Teachers with second class certificates lost the ability to teach in first or second class high schools in 1932 (State Department of Education 1932). The Texas Legislature codified the issuance and renewal of teacher certifications in 1933. Although counties retained the ability to issue certificates, the state attempted to standardize requirements for all teachers in the state. Beginning with the 1934-1935 school year, Texas required school districts with standard four-year high schools to hire only teachers (at the elementary, junior high, and high school levels) who possessed four year college degrees. Teachers in classified high schools who were not college graduates were required to earn 18 semester hours of college credit every three years to retain employment (State Department of Education *Laws, Rules, and Regulations Governing State Teachers' Certificates* 1933). The number of teachers without college degrees continued to be low throughout the 1930s.

During the economic crisis of the early 1930s, school districts across Texas lowered teachers' salaries. During the 1929-1930 school year, the average salaries for white males and females were \$1518 and \$1002 respectively. By the 1934-1935 school year, salaries for white teachers had fallen to \$969 for males and \$883 for females. Black teachers' salaries declined as well. For the 1929-1930 school year a black male earned \$818, but by the 1934-1935 school, his salary had fallen to \$658. Similarly, black females

suffered reductions in pay. During 1929-1930, a black female earned \$588, but by the 1934-1935 school year, a black female's pay had dropped to \$532 (State Department of Education *Twenty-Sixth Biennial Report* 1931, 1937). Pay levels for teachers did not return to pre-Depression levels until the 1942-1943 school year.

In 1941, Theodore Hogrobook, known as the Bronze Governor, issued a call for Texas teachers to contribute to a fund to institute a law suit to force the equalization of salaries in Texas. Further, the NAACP branches in the state began discussing legal action to force equalization of educational opportunities for blacks in Texas at this time (Texas Teachers and Salary Equalization 1941). The NAACP turned to the legal system to force salary equalization in the South, beginning in 1936 (Bullock 1967). Cases such as *Page v. Board of Education of Dallas* forced the state's hand in initiating legislation to equalize not only teacher's salaries, but educational opportunities for all children (Papers of the NAACP, Part 3, Campaign for educational equality, Series B, Legal Department and Central Office records, 1940-1950; Banks 1962).

By 1945, nearly 70% of all teachers in Texas, elementary and secondary, had earned college degrees. Black teachers earned a higher percentage of bachelor's degrees, whereas white teachers possessed a greater percentage of advanced degrees. At this time, advanced educational opportunities in Texas were limited for blacks and most left the state to seek advanced degrees. The average annual salary for white males in the state was \$1993. White females earned an average annual salary of \$1382. Not surprisingly, black males earned only an average salary of \$1238 and black females earned an average of \$1098 annually, still far below that of their white counterparts (State Department of Education 1947).

Table 4.2: Average Salaries of Teachers in Texas 1930, 1935, and 1945

	<b>1930<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>1935<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>1945<sup>c</sup></b>
<b>White Males</b>	\$1518	\$969	\$1993
<b>Black Males</b>	\$ 818	\$658	\$1382
<b>White Females</b>	\$1002	\$883	\$1492
<b>Black Females</b>	\$ 588	\$ 532	\$1098

<sup>a</sup>(State Department of Education *Twenty-Sixth Biennial Report* 1931)

<sup>b</sup>(State Department of Education *Twenty-Ninth Biennial Report* 1937)

<sup>c</sup>(State Department of Education *Thirty-Fourth Biennial Report* 1947)

In 1949, the Texas Legislature passed three bills known as the Gilmer-Aiken laws. These bills consolidated school districts, reducing the number of districts in Texas from 4500 to 2900. Further, they provided funding to equalize educational opportunities between wealthy and poor districts, raised teacher salaries, equalized pay between elementary and secondary teachers and between black and white teachers, and standardized the school year to encompass 175 days of instruction (House Concurrent Resolution No. 48 1947). The Gilmer-Aiken laws were not successful in equalizing teachers' salaries across the state. It was not until the 1957-1958 school year when the state legislature mandated salary equalization for every school district in Texas (Texas Education Agency 1960).

Salaries and teaching certification levels increased as the decade of the 1950s dawned. A higher percentage of white teachers held a master's or a doctoral degree than did black teachers. Conversely, a greater percentage of African-American teachers graduated from college than did their white counterparts. The *Thirty-Sixth Biennial Report* noted that 92% of black teachers earned at least a bachelor's degree compared to 90% of white teachers that had earned degrees. For the 1949-1950 school year, the

average white male teacher in Texas earned \$3085 and a female of the same grade level received an average salary of \$3015. African-American male teachers earned \$2972, a salary less than white females earned; black females earned an average of \$2953 annually (Texas Education Agency 1952). Interestingly, African-American men teaching in high schools earned a slightly higher salary than did white males in high schools. Likely this was due to the fact that most black principals also taught classes and commanded higher salaries than did the average high school teacher. Only full time principals were categorized as administrators in state reports, whereas principals who also taught classes were included in the salary figures for teachers.

The Supreme Court rendered the *Brown v Board of Education of Topeka* in May, 1954. Despite the Court's mandate to desegregate schools, little changed for African-American teachers in Texas. *Brown II* the following year received the same scant attention as did the original *Brown* decision. Only a few school districts desegregated within a few years of the *Brown* decision.

The Texas Legislature passed a new teacher certification law in May, 1955. Teachers who earned certificates prior to 1955 were grandfathered into the new program, allowing them to retain the certificates for which they originally had qualified. The new law set forth two types of certificates: provisional and professional certificates. A provisional certificate required that the teacher earn a bachelor's degree and the certificate was valid for life. The professional certificate required the teacher to earn at least 30 semester hours of graduate work beyond the bachelor's degree and to have completed at least three years of teaching (Texas Education Agency *Teacher Certification in Texas* 1955).

Beginning with 1957-1958 school year, new teachers holding a bachelor's degree earned \$356 per month or \$3204 per year. Teachers earned an additional \$6 per month

for each year of teaching experience, to a maximum of \$72. Teachers who acquired a master's degree or doctoral degree received salaries of \$381 per month or \$3429 annually. These teachers also received the additional \$6 per month for each year of experience.

By 1965, state reports no longer disaggregated salaries by race or gender. Statistics of teacher qualifications were disaggregated by elementary school and by years of experience in each subject area for secondary teachers, prohibiting a direct comparison of elementary and secondary teachers' salaries. The Texas Education Agency reported that 98.5% of all teachers in the state held at least a bachelors degree with 37% earning advanced degrees (1966). The lack of disaggregated statistics at the state level may have been due to equalization efforts. It also may have been due to several pending lawsuits aimed at ending segregation in the schools. Information regarding inequities in teacher salaries could not be used against districts in anti-discrimination lawsuits if it were unavailable.

The qualifications for teachers in Texas changed dramatically during between 1900 and 1965. At the turn of the twentieth century, few teachers possessed high school diplomas. By 1965, almost all teachers, black and white, held at least a bachelor's degree. Additionally, the salary structure for teachers changed greatly. Originally, white males teaching in independent school districts earned the highest salaries and black females in common school districts earned less than half of the salary of a white male. By 1965, all teachers in Texas were paid according to a state mandated minimum salary schedule. The educational accomplishments and salary patterns for teachers in Texas varied from district to district across the state. The teachers of the Gonzales Independent School District provide an example of the educational accomplishments, and salary patterns for the teachers in one small Texas town.

## **The Teachers of Gonzales**

### **EDUCATION, CERTIFICATION, AND SALARIES**

The African-American teachers in Gonzales, Texas, consistently exceeded the average state educational levels for black teachers throughout the twentieth century. Whereas most black teachers earned second class teaching certificates during the early years of the 1900s, by the 1950s, many of the district's African-American teachers were enrolled in graduate studies. Black teachers earned significantly less than white teachers in Gonzales until the passage of the Gilmer-Aiken laws in 1949. However, the local school board circumvented the law and continued to pay white teachers higher salaries than those earned by African-American teachers. Not until the late 1950s did black teachers in Gonzales ISD achieve financial parity with their white counterparts.

The earliest extant records for teachers in Gonzales County date from the late 1800s. J.M Abernathy, the head teacher/principal of Gonzales Colored School came to Gonzales from Tennessee in 1878 (Colored People's Festival 1878, 3). For the months of November and December in 1878, Abernathy earned \$55 per month, well above the average of \$43 per month paid to African-American male teachers in the county school system (Gonzales School Fund 1886; State Board of Education 1881). During 1879, Abernathy earned \$60 per month from January through April and \$35.70 in May. Gonzales' records did not mention Abernathy again until February, 1882, the last year of his recorded employment, indicating that his pay for the spring semester of that year was \$40 in February, \$50 in April, and \$53 in May (Gonzales School Fund 1886). By 1892, the Gonzales Colored School employed a principal and three assistants. These four

teachers instructed between 124 and 145 students during a school term of nine months.<sup>20</sup> The African-American teachers attended a teacher institute on the third Saturday of each month at the “colored school” (*Gonzales City Schools Annual Report for the Year 1896-1897* 1897).

Teaching certificates in Texas were issued by the county or by the state with the certification level being determined by educational attainment and examinations. Mary Abernathy, a grade leader at Gonzales Colored School earned a permanent primary certificate from the State Summer Normal school in 1900. State Superintendent, J.S. Kendall, issued the certificate following successful completion of examinations given at the conclusion of the summer institute. Napoleon Edwards, another grade leader at the school, was issued his teaching certificate by the board of directors of Prairie View Normal School upon completion of requirements for his diploma (*Gonzales Independent School District Teacher Certificate Records 1895-1918*). Having two individuals with this level of certification indeed was unusual for a small town school in an era when many teachers failed to complete elementary school.

Gonzales County did not follow the educational patterns seen throughout Texas. The county failed to report the educational achievement of teachers in 1910, but provided certification levels for white and black teachers. Although the preponderance of teachers, black and white, held second class certificates (77%), several teachers held first class or permanent certificates. A greater percentage of black teachers held the higher levels of credentials. Eighteen of the county’s 38 black teachers (47%) possessed first class certifications and four percent held permanent certificates. Of the 91 white teachers in the county, 13% held first class certificates and seven percent possessed permanent teaching

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<sup>20</sup> Although 145 African-American students were enrolled in the school, the average attendance was 124 students. School attendance varied seasonally due to children working on farms during planting and harvesting seasons.

certificates (State Department of Education 1911). In the Gonzales Independent School District, 18 of 19 teachers held state certifications, rather than county issued certificates, with 85% of the teachers possessing first class or permanent certifications. Five of the six African-American teachers also possessed state certifications with 34% holding first class or permanent certifications. Half of the black teachers in Gonzales ISD earned state issued second class certifications.

Many of the teachers at Edwards High earned second class certifications initially. They furthered their education to build to a higher level of certification. For example, Fannie Artis earned a second class certification after attending a summer normal in 1908. By 1933, she had completed two years of college and raised her certification to a first class high school certificate. Similarly, Virginia Porter first earned a state second grade certificate in 1919. By 1925, Miss Porter had completed the normal course at Prairie View and raised her certificate to a state first class credential. Some teachers earned permanent certification after graduating from college. Eleanor Jackson and Maggie Reid graduated from Prairie View and qualified for a permanent certificate in 1925. District officials considered years of experience, as well as educational achievement, in determining teacher salaries. Fannie Artis, who held a second class certification in 1925 with 28 years of teaching experience, earned the same salary as those individuals who recently had graduated from normal school and received a permanent certificate (*Gonzales Independent School District Teacher Certificate Records 1895-1918, Register of Teacher Certificates 1921-1937*). The permanent certificate alone did not qualify Jackson or Reid for a higher salary than that earned by other teachers with second class certifications and more years teaching experience.

By 1925, 60% of black and white teachers graduated from a state normal school or college/university. Nearly 10% more white teachers graduated from high school than

did black teachers; only 2% of white teachers had not completed high school compared to 12% of black teachers who had not earned a high school diploma. The average annual salary of white teachers in independent school districts was \$1721 for males and \$1100 for females. For black teachers in independent school districts, males earned an average of \$891 and females earned \$642 annually. In Gonzales ISD, the average annual salary for a white male was \$2116, higher than the state average. However, white females earned an average of \$907, significantly less than the state average. White teachers fared better than did their black counterparts in Gonzales. Black males earned an average of \$765 per year and females earned \$443 per year (State Department of Education *The Twenty-Fourth Biennial Report* 1926). Salaries for African-American males and females rated well below the state average. African-American females suffered added disadvantage; not only did they suffer from racial discrimination, but also from gender discrimination that elevated males above females (Fairclough 2007). The average salaries included those of school principals, normally males, whose positions garnered them higher salaries. One possible reason for the below average pay for blacks in Gonzales was that a greater number of students were enrolled in Gonzales High School, the white high school, requiring more secondary teachers who typically earned higher salaries than elementary teachers. Another possibility was that salaries were determined by the local board of trustees who felt that blacks needed less salary than whites for living expenses. Although not all teachers' salaries were available for 1925, teachers at Edwards High, male and female, typically earned \$495 annually and the principal, George Edwards, earned \$765 for his duties (Gonzales Independent School District *Register of Teacher Certificates 1921-1937*).

Many people across the United States suffered during the economic downturn of the early 1930s. Teachers throughout Texas were no exception. The teachers in Gonzales

acutely felt the sting of the Great Depression. On May 31, 1932, the Gonzales school board voted to cut teachers' salaries by 10% for the following school year. Teachers at Edwards High earned an average of \$45 per month, \$5 less per month than they had in 1931. The \$45 the average teacher earned in 1931 already was a reduction from the \$55 that the same teachers earned in 1927. One teacher was eliminated from Edwards for financial reasons. The board enacted an additional 10% salary cut in May, 1932, lowering the average teacher's pay to \$40 monthly. Eleventh grade was added to Edwards High in the fall of 1933, and the board hired a new teacher at a salary of \$45 per month. An additional teacher also was hired for the white high school in the fall of 1933, but at a salary of \$100 per month. George Edwards, principal of Edwards High, earned \$675 for the 1933-1934 school year, nearly \$1000 less than George Lacy, the principal of Gonzales High earned the same year. Clearly Edwards High teachers suffered from the economic decline of the Great Depression more severely than did their white counterparts at Gonzales High School. In May, 1935, the Gonzales ISD board of trustees reinstated the 10% reduction that they implemented in 1933 (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965 Book 5). Teachers still earned far less than they had eight years earlier. Despite the economic dearth during the early 1930s, many Edwards's teachers remained at the school. Between 1930 and 1935, three of Edwards' six teachers remained employed at the school. As the student population of Edwards grew, so did the teaching force. A principal and eight teachers instructed pupils at the school in 1940, an increase of two teachers from 1935.

On December 7, 1941, the Empire of Japan bombed the United States naval fleet at Pearl Harbor initiating the United States' entry into World War II. Young men across the country left schools and jobs to serve their country. Many men volunteered and many more were drafted into military service. The young men of Gonzales and Edwards High

were no exception. Several students dropped out of school to enlist in the military. Teachers also left the school to entry military service. Leroy Perryman, a coach and physical education teacher at Edwards High School, was inducted into the military and served four years before returning to his position at the school (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965 Book 8). Scant student records from the 1940s hindered an understanding of student enrollment, curriculum, and activities during this period. However, Gonzales ISD employed a principal and seven teachers at Edwards in 1943, indicating that student enrollment had not decreased significantly from 1940 levels.

Following the war, in April 1946, eight teachers and the principal of Edwards High School were re-elected to their positions for the following school year. Beginning in the fall of 1946, the board of trustees authorized an annual salary of \$630 for the teachers at Edwards and \$990 for the principal, Isaac Spencer. The salaries commanded by the teachers for the 1946-1947 school year represented an increase of \$225 from the salaries they earned 10 years earlier. Beginning with the 1947-1948 school year, the state legislature mandated that every school district in the state provide a minimum beginning salary of at least \$2000 for full time teachers with a bachelor's degree. Teachers with additional college training and teaching experience earned additional salaries (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965 Book 9). Teachers not holding a bachelor's degree were paid according to a state equalization salary schedule (State Department of Education Public School Laws of The State of Texas 1949). The Gonzales school board drafted a compensation plan for teachers at the white high school. Although the plan did not meet the requirements of the state mandate, teachers at Gonzales High earned \$1170-\$1485 per year, based on their teaching assignment, \$175 more than teachers earned the previous year. Edwards' teachers also benefited from the

salary equalization efforts of the district, although not as substantially as did teachers at Gonzales High. Edwards High teachers earned \$100 more than their previous year's salary. The increase raised the average Edwards High teacher's salary to \$730 per year, significantly below the equalized pay required by the state (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 9).

By 1950, the Gonzales ISD board of trustees reported salaries as set by the Gilmer-Aiken schedule. Although Edwards' teachers were subject to the same salary stipulations as teachers at Gonzales High, the trustees circumvented the system and continued to pay teachers at the white high school higher salaries than the teachers at Edwards High. The teachers at Gonzales High received bonuses which elevated their salaries; however, the Board offered no bonuses to Edwards High School teachers (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 10).

Table 4.3: Principal's Annual Salaries in Gonzales ISD 1916-1946 (in dollars)<sup>a</sup>

<b>Year</b>	<b>White Principal's Salary</b>	<b>Black Principal's Salary</b>
1916	1197	450
1924	2000	765
1938	2100	765
1946	2500	900

<sup>a</sup>(Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965)

Teachers at Edwards High held at least a bachelor's degree by the beginning of the 1950s. Most teachers earned their degree at one of the historically black colleges or universities within Texas. Samuel Huston College, Tillotson College, Prairie View A & M College, Texas Southern, Bishop College, Paul Quinn College, and St. Phillips

College were the most commonly attended schools.<sup>21</sup> Other teachers, however, earned degrees from universities outside of Texas. Jesse Smith, for example, earned a bachelor's degree from Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee (*The Gopher* 1951).

Teachers at Edwards High pursued advanced degrees, entering master's degree programs at Texas State or Prairie View A&M. Several teachers sought advanced degrees outside of Texas, often during the summer months, because African-Americans could not enter the segregated colleges in Texas. Alvin Perryman, for example, studied at the University of Southern California (USC); music teacher John Polk received a master's degree from the University of Colorado; Carrie Spencer earned a master's degree from Columbia University; Eulalia King attended Atlanta University and Leroy Perryman completed a master's degree in social work from Atlanta University prior to studying psychology at the Sorbonne (*The Gopher* 1951).

In addition to summer coursework, black teachers expanded their knowledge through other means. For example, many teachers at Edwards participated in the Teachers State Association of Texas. This black teachers' organization published a bi-monthly journal from 1926 until 1966. The journal published articles on topics such as curriculum, pedagogy, historical perspectives, legal issues, teacher preparation, and financial matters affecting teachers (Morowski 2007, 205-219). Beginning in 1939, the journal also published lists of honor schools, schools in which all teachers had joined the State Association. Edwards High first appeared as an honor school in the January/February 1950 edition of *Texas Standard* under principal Isaac Spencer (Honor Schools 1950,17). The school earned honor school status again in 1951 under Spencer and in 1953 under the leadership of Leroy Perryman (Honor Schools 1951, 33; Honor Schools 1953,26). The school was listed for most of the 1950s and 1960s. In addition to

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<sup>21</sup> Samuel Huston College and Tillotson College merged in 1952 to become Huston-Tillotson College (Williams 1997).

encouraging teachers to participate in the State Association, Leroy Perryman took an active role in a local teachers' organization. Perryman served as the treasurer of the Bexar and Adjoining Counties Teacher Association. When this group merged with the Teachers State Association, Perryman became the representative of the Southwest District, serving as a member of the State Association's executive committee (Southwest District Association Organized 1960, 23; Southwest District TSAT Representatives 1960, 29). Perryman served in this capacity from 1960 until the group's merger with the white teachers' association in 1966 (Teachers State Association of Texas Officers 1966, 11).

In 1955, the district superintendent appointed five African-Americans to serve on the textbook selection committee for the first time in the district's history. Alvin Perryman, Clara Fryer, Cora Bell Campbell, and Jesse Smith, teachers at Edwards, and Mildred Ben Stewart, the principal of Riverside Elementary, worked with white teachers on the textbook committee (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 12). Never before had African-American teachers served in a decision-making capacity at the district level.

When the board of trustees appointed a committee of educators to investigate desegregation, it excluded African-Americans teachers. Largely, Gonzales ISD ignored the *Brown* decision and its implications. Although the Supreme Court issued the *Brown* decision in 1954, not until 1957 did the Gonzales ISD Board of Trustees initiate a discussion of how the district might react if forced to desegregate the schools. Throughout this period, life changed little for the teachers at Edwards High.

The principals of southern African-American schools walked a fine line as they supported the wishes of their communities to press for desegregation and as they appeased white district officials who wanted to retain the status quo. When Leroy Perryman notified the superintendent of Gonzales ISD that some black teachers and local

ministers were trying to organize a chapter of the NAACP in Gonzales in the spring of 1959, he placated local officials. The school board recognized the dangers of such a group forming locally and instructed the principal to reprimand the offending teachers and to warn all other teachers against participating in NAACP activities. Although the teachers involved were respected by the community and by other teachers, Perryman, the principal, complied and labeled the two teachers as “weak”. Perryman’s actions drew the wrath of community leaders directing the NAACP’s efforts. Former Edwards High principal George Edwards spearheaded a group of local NAACP supporters who worked for the ouster of Principal Perryman for the next two years on grounds that he was a “tyrant” and was unfit to head the school. Ultimately, the board sided with Perryman, re-elected him as principal, and cited the community uprising as a “personal matter” between Perryman and members of the black community (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 13).

This incident highlighted the underlying racial tensions that existed in Gonzales during this period. Teachers faced a difficult predicament. If they stood behind the wishes of many in the local community and supported the NAACP’s efforts to force better facilities and ultimately, desegregation, they were subject to the loss of their jobs. Conversely, if they remained silent and appeased the school board’s wishes to maintain the status quo, they were subject to the scrutiny and loss of the respect by the local African-American community. The two teachers involved in the fracas in Gonzales, Jesse Smith and Roy Evelyn Smith, ceased their public support of the NAACP and retained their jobs (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 13). School boards throughout the South attempted to intimidate teachers who supported the efforts of the NAACP, forcing many teachers to secret their membership in the organization (Bullock 1967). Jesse Smith was highly regarded for his teaching skills and

was one of only two teachers chosen to move to Gonzales High when school desegregation occurred. He was so beloved by students, black and white, that the 1981 edition of the Gonzales High yearbook, *Lexington*, was dedicated to him. Although Jesse Smith was highly regarded as a teacher by the local community, he was not immune from the wrath of a school board seeking to delay or avoid desegregating the local schools.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed segregation in schools and public places in the United States. Under Title VI of the act, schools that were not compliant with desegregation mandates lost federal funding. In February, 1965, the Gonzales ISD board of trustees voted to comply with the federal mandate and to desegregate the junior and senior high schools in Gonzales. However, all teachers from Edwards High were to be dismissed or moved to the junior high or elementary schools; no teachers were transferred to Gonzales High. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act prohibited discrimination in employment. In April, 1965, the board of trustees voted to transfer two teachers, science teacher Jesse Smith and Spanish teacher Betty Green, to Gonzales High to solve the “problem” of hiring black teachers. In the end, nine African-American teachers from Edwards High lost their jobs, two were transferred to the junior high and two accompanied Edwards’ students to Gonzales High (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 13). In most areas throughout the South, black students were integrated into white schools. Black teachers were not integrated into white faculties due to the underlying belief of white trustees that a school with an all black faculty did not provide the same quality of education as did one with white teachers (Foster 1997).

The African-American teachers of Gonzales Independent School district were well educated individuals who earned far less than their white counterparts until the late 1950s. The teachers at Edwards High participated in professional associations and

sponsored numerous extra-curricular activities to enrich the lives of their students. Despite their impressive credentials, many teachers at Edwards High lost their jobs due to the desegregation of the district's high schools.

### **TEACHERS AND STUDENTS**

The teachers at Edwards High were caring individuals who worked to provide educational opportunities for their students. Many of the teachers were alumni of the school and had family members still attending Edwards High. These teachers forged strong bonds with their students. They taught students to navigate the difficulties of living in a Jim Crow society and prepared them for the time when racial barriers ceased to exist.

Like many other black teachers at the time, “their behavior was more than caring...although they worked in constrained educational circumstances, they were not debilitated by these circumstances. Rather they were increasingly well-trained educators who worked...to educate African American children in a Jim Crow society (Siddle Walker 2001, 751-779).

Many of the teachers at Edwards were former Edwards High graduates and intimately were familiar with school's history and traditions. Being from Gonzales, they more readily were accepted by the African-American community: they were one of their own. African-Americans favored teachers who supported their political aims and respected their moral codes (Fairclough 2007). These former Edwards' students emulated their former teachers and chose teaching as a career. In turn, they returned to Edwards to continue the work initiated by their former teachers. Siddle Walker noted that the goal of black teachers in the South was to make their students successful (1996). Dorothy Thomas Ahart, for example, graduated from Edwards in 1953, earned a degree from Huston-Tillotson College, and returned to Edwards High to teach typing and business

classes (Edwards High Student Records 1935-1966; Edwards High School History; *The Gopher* 1951).

Unlike many teachers who grew up in Gonzales, the principals often were not lifelong residents of the town. These leaders shared the knowledge they had gained in their exposure to other geographic locations and educational ideas. This information broadened the knowledge of Edwards' faculty. In turn, the faculty's greater understanding of educational goals and methods served to enhance student learning. George Edwards, principal from 1924-1934, was born in Harris County, near Houston. When Edward's family moved to Gonzales, he entered Gonzales Colored School and graduated as the valedictorian of his class. Edwards taught in several Texas towns before returning to Gonzales to teach and eventually to serve as the school's principal. After his tenure at Gonzales Colored School, Edwards became a pastor in Gonzales, as well as an active leader in NAACP efforts in the area. Edward's successor, Felix Garrett, relocated to Gonzales from Austin to teach at the school. Like Edwards, Garrett was promoted to serve as the school's principal from 1934-1939. Isaac Spencer, Garrett's successor, was born in Columbus, Texas, and came to Gonzales to serve as the school's principal. Garrett organized the Interscholastic League for Gonzales County (Edwards Reunion: Putting the Pieces Together 1986). Edwards High School's last principal, Leroy Perryman, earned a master's degree from Atlanta University and studied at the Sorbonne before coming to Edwards to teach and eventually become the principal at Edwards High (*The Gopher* 1951).

At times, more than one member of a family taught at Edwards, further strengthening the school's sense of community. Winston Fryer graduated from Edwards

High in 1950 and later returned to teach vocational agriculture classes after graduating from Prairie View A&M. His younger brother, Frank, graduated from Edwards High in 1951 and became one of the school's coaches after completing his collegiate studies. Winston's wife Clara, a former Edwards' student, taught home economics at Edwards. Clara Fryer's older sister was an elementary school teacher and her younger sister, Florence, also Frank Fryer's wife, served as a teacher's aide at an African-American elementary school in Gonzales (Oral History Interview with Winston Fryer 2006; Oral History Interview with Florence Fryer 2007). Other Edwards High teachers had relatives who were attending Edwards during their teaching years. Former student Ella Harris spoke of her cousin, Reva Johnson, working as the librarian at Edwards (Starr 1977). Reva Johnson graduated from Edwards in 1943, earned a bachelor's from Huston-Tillotson College, and completed a master's degree from Prairie View A&M before returning to Edwards High (Edwards School Student Records 1935-1965). These familial ties strengthened the Edwards community.

Several of the Edwards principals' wives taught at Edwards across the years. Felix and Ella Garrett worked at Edwards during the 1930s. Isaac and Carrie Spencer were employed at Edwards during the 1940s, with Isaac serving as principal and Carrie teaching home economics. Leroy and Alvin Perryman taught together at Edwards and Leroy went on to serve as principal of the school during the 1950s and 1960s (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965).

The strong sense of community that was created at Edwards enabled teachers to encourage students to excel and created caring and mutually respectful relationships (Oral History Interview with Winston Fryer 2006; Oral History Interview with Wray

Hood 2006; Oral History Interview with Ella Harris 2007). Successful black teachers throughout the South were those who related learning to life and related teaching to the community culture (Caliver 1933, 432-447). Likely, the teachers at Edwards High School had inter-personal traits similar to other African-American teachers throughout the South. Their goal was “to set ‘higher ideals’ before them [students], to serve as role models, and to foster new ambitions, aspirations, and motivation” (Fultz 1995, 401-422), to light a torch in the lives of others (Robinson 1978). Students appreciated the teachers’ efforts and turned to them as mentors and confidants. Former students spoke of teachers being “so good and....personable,” “truly a teacher with extra concern for pupils,” “they were all kind and friendly” (Oral History Interview with Ella Harris 2007; Oral History Interview with Wray Hood 2006; Oral History Interview with Winston Fryer 2006). Like the students at Edwards High, many former students in segregated schools throughout the South described black teachers of this era as being open to students and encouraging them to work to their fullest (Jones 1981). African-American teachers provided a caring environment for students, by knowing the individuals, their surroundings and background, and the history of their social class (DuBois 1935, 328-335).

Teachers dealt with topics at school that parents did not want to address at home. For example, Roy Evelyn Smith taught health and physical education at Edwards High. She taught female students how to care for themselves as they entered puberty and instructed them on feminine hygiene. Students were grateful for her guidance, as many parents did not discuss this issue with their daughters (Oral History Interview with Ella Harris 2007). Black teachers instilled motivation and self respect in their students (Perkins 1989).

The job of a teacher at Edwards High extended well beyond the school day. Student records dating from the 1930s indicated that teachers assumed duties as coaches and club sponsors to ensure that students had opportunities for growth in a variety of areas. These extracurricular, or recreational, activities served to educate and meet the needs of the whole child. The teachers' participation in and dedication to sponsoring extra-curricular activities varied widely. Some teachers oversaw no activities. Others went out of their way to ensure an adequate number and variety of activities in which students might participate. In 1951, 10 of Edwards High's 12 teachers coached or sponsored at least one extracurricular activity (*The Gopher* 1951). The activities that teachers sponsored changed over time, but throughout Edwards' history, teachers served students in and out of the classroom.

According to available evidence, Edwards' teachers were respected not only by students but by parents and other members of the community. As scholars have noted, teachers, along with ministers and physicians, were part of the black professional class. They were educated and were considered people who had "made it" (Siddle Walker 1996). Teachers took the responsibility for their students' success seriously. If a student did not complete homework or assigned tasks, a teacher would punish a student and then send a note home to parents. Parents then chastised the student at home and work was completed (Oral History Interview with Winston Fryer 2006). At the high school level, some teachers sent errant male students to their coaches for discipline or for direction. These students dreaded disappointing their coaches by creating problems in school. Some preferred the wrath of their parents to the disappointment of their coaches (Oral History Interview with Florence Fryer 2007). Whatever means the teachers used to ensure student

success, they did so because they understood the difficulties that black youth faced in society. They also desired for their students to be prepared for the era after segregation.

The teachers of Edwards High School served as role models to their students. Often Edwards' alumni returned to teach at the school after completing college. Although many of the school's teachers came from the Gonzales area, the school's principals were from other areas of Texas or from out of state. The teachers of Edwards High School devoted time and attention to ensure students' success and were respected not only by students but by the larger African-American community in Gonzales.

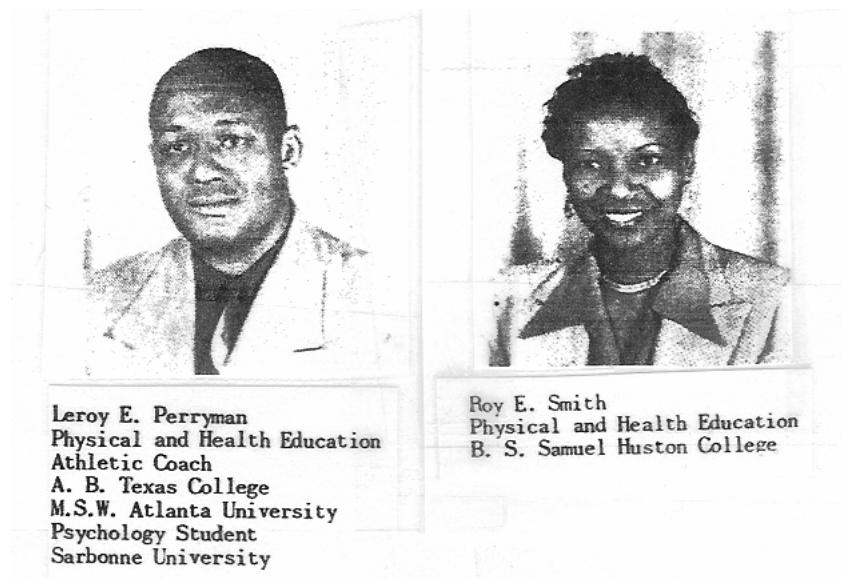


Illustration 4.2: Edwards High Teachers 1951 (Photos courtesy of Gonzales Independent School District)

### TEACHERS AND THE COMMUNITY

The teachers at Edwards High served not only the students of Gonzales, but also the larger community. They offered courses for adults in the evenings and participated in

community events. Additionally, teachers invited the African-American community to the school to share in holiday celebrations and the school's special occasions, such as graduation. These interactions enhanced the teachers' and administrators' positions in the community and established Edwards High as a focal point of the black community in Gonzales.

Beginning in 1937, adult classes, held in the evenings at Edwards, consisted of emergency education, household employment training, and home hygiene. Although the Gonzales ISD trustees permitted the evening classes, they provided no financial support to the teachers. In September, 1940, the board of trustees received funds from the State Board of Education to subsidize three quarters of the \$150 salary for the instructor, Carrie Spencer. However, Spencer had to collect tuition from the participants to cover the remaining one quarter of her salary.

In addition to teaching classes for adults, the teachers and administrators at Edwards supported the efforts of the black community in Gonzales. In 1942, local African American businesses donated funds for awards for a bond rally. Listed among the participants was the principal of Edwards, Isaac Spencer (Gonzales Negroes Contribute to Bond Rally 1942, 1). Likewise in 1943, Edwards High was commended as being the first school in the county to give one hundred percent to the Red Cross drive (Colored People Commended for Red Cross Gifts 1943, 1). Leading many of the community events were ministers of black churches in and around Gonzales. Ministers, like teachers, were educated and were respected members of the community. Alliances created between the school principal and local ministers increased cooperation and communication among these leaders and heightened the school's standing in the African-American community. Edwards' faculty and staff participated in another bond rally in 1943 (Colored Folks To Hold Bond Rally Tonight 1943, 1).

Some teachers' influence extended beyond the African-American community. One such teacher was Jesse Smith. Jesse Smith earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. Smith joined the Edwards' faculty in 1951 as a science teacher and remained at the school until its closure in 1965 (Edwards Reunion: Putting the Pieces Together 1986). Smith was assigned to teach at the junior high school following Edwards' closure, but was one of two teachers moved to Gonzales High School to ensure that the district would be in compliance with its desegregation plan (Gonzales Independent School District Board of Trustees 1892 - 1965, Book 13). During Smith's time at Gonzales High he won the respect of the students at the high school and the white community of Gonzales. In 1981, Gonzales High School dedicated its yearbook, *Lexington*, to Smith, whom the yearbook described as "a master teacher, civic leader, and a dear friend" (*Lexington* 1981).<sup>22</sup> Jesse Smith was a teacher whose influence extended beyond the African-American community to the white community of Gonzales.

Edwards High worked to meet the needs of the larger African-American community in Gonzales. Teachers and administrators welcomed community members into the school to attend special events such as Christmas programs, baccalaureate services, and commencement ceremonies. Through the events at the school and the interaction of faculty and staff in town events, Edwards High became a focal point of the African-American community in Gonzales.

## **Summary and Conclusions**

Over the course of the twentieth century, teachers at Edwards High raised their levels of education and certification. Many teachers attended normal schools or earned

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<sup>22</sup> See Appendix.

bachelors degrees, sometimes outpacing the white teachers of the district. Unfortunately, the salaries of Edwards' teachers did not follow suit until the state mandated a minimum salary schedule in 1957. Despite their low wages, teachers provided a valuable education to the students of the school. They inspired students and built trusting relationships, at time acting as surrogate parents. Many of the teachers came from the town and knew well the families of the students entrusted to their care. They established a relationship with the community offering classes for adults and supporting war efforts during World War II.

Teachers celebrated students' accomplishments with graduation ceremonies and receptions. The Edwards High teachers and administrators participated in state organizations and assumed leadership roles in these associations. They attended summer training programs in and out of the state to further their knowledge and continually become better teachers. The teachers of Edwards High were not stereotypical of many black teachers described in current literature, but were educated, motivated individuals seeking to provide their students with an education to help them survive in a Jim Crow world and to prepare them to compete in an integrated society.

Some scholars whose work examines black teachers in the 1800s through the 1930s (Anderson 1988; Bullock 1967) posit that African-American teachers were less educated and less qualified than white teachers. Other scholars whose work considers black teachers from the 1930s through the 1950s (Siddle Walker 2000, 253-285; Foster 1997) note the value that black teachers brought to their segregated classrooms. Although the teachers of Edwards High earned far lower salaries than the teachers at white schools, they earned normal school and college degrees. The African-American teachers of Gonzales generally earned teaching credentials similar to the white teachers. At times, more of Gonzales' black teachers held higher credentials than did the white teachers.

These individuals were caring and dedicated and understood the perils that students faced living in a Jim Crow society. They understood that students needed to be prepared for the time when segregation ended.

Although many of Edwards' teachers were from the Gonzales area, most of the principals were from other areas of Texas or from out of state. Their experiences outside of Gonzales enriched their knowledge and exposed them to new ideas. When the principals arrived at Edwards, they were able to share their experiences with the faculty; thus, all the teachers at Edwards benefited. They held a bachelor's or a master's degree. One principal, Leroy Perryman studied at the Sorbonne. Generally, high schools for African-American students in large cities attracted the most highly qualified individuals (Fairclough 2007). The principals of Edwards High epitomized the type of individual that city schools desired.

The teachers and principals at Edwards High were responsible for implementing a changing curriculum. These individuals ensured that the latest state standards were met. The following chapter examines the curriculum of Edwards High School from 1935 through 1965 and considers the changes which occurred in the curriculum during this period.

## CHAPTER 5

### READING, WRITING, AND ARITHMETIC, AND MORE

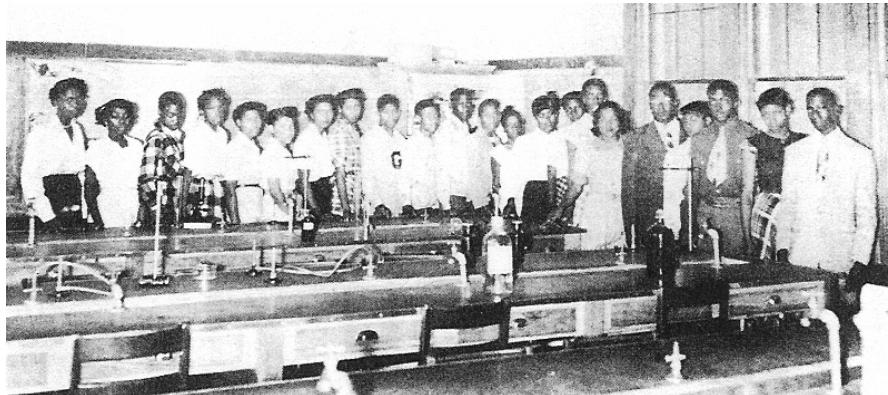


Illustration 5.1: Edwards High School Science Department Club 1951  
(Photo courtesy of Gonzales Independent School District)

The curriculum of the American high school experienced many changes throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. From the humanistic education of Charles Elliott in the late 1800s to the scientific mandates of the National Defense Act of 1958, the underlying purpose of schooling determined the academic content presented in classrooms. This tenet was true for African-American high schools, though the debate regarding the purpose of schooling differed from that of white high schools. For African-American schools, a central issue was what type of secondary education was appropriate for black youth. On one side of the issue was Booker T. Washington who, supported by northern philanthropies, promoted the concept of industrial/vocational education for black youth. Opposing this view was W.E.B. DuBois who supported an academic, or liberal arts, education. DuBois noted that industrial training for black youth perpetuated the subservient status of blacks and relegated academic pursuits as being for whites only.

(DuBois 1903). For DuBois, Washington's position denied blacks a chance at true equality (Kliebard 1995).

The Slater Fund and the General Education Board (GEB) materially supported Washington's Tuskegee Institute model of black secondary education throughout the rural South. The Slater Fund financed county training schools throughout the American South beginning in 1911. The first county training schools in Texas began in 1919 in six counties. The Slater Fund aided local counties in establishing and maintaining the schools, whereas the General Education Board provided funds for erecting shops, purchasing equipment, and supplementing teachers' salaries (State Department of Education 1923). Prior to the advent of county training schools, numerous private academies operated for black students, as well as several public schools which largely were located in urban areas (Jones 1917). By 1916, Texas had more than thirty black public high schools, at least three times as many as any other state in the South (Anderson 1988).

Few records exist regarding the curriculum of black high schools during the early years of the 1900s. Beginning in the 1920s, the process of classifying and accrediting black high schools was led by the State Agent for Negro Education. This individual, along with his assistants, traveled throughout the state visiting black schools and oversaw efforts to improve the African-American schools in Texas. During the 1920s, the classification and accreditation of black schools initiated an era of curricular standardization which guided school curriculum throughout the twenty-first century.<sup>23</sup> Although the Texas State Department of Education mandated the curriculum for accredited high schools, the extent to which unaccredited schools followed the state standards is unclear because little is known of the course offerings in these schools. As

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<sup>23</sup> White high schools were classified by the State Department of Education beginning in 1911. Black high schools were not eligible for classification until 1920 (State Department of Education 1916, 1923),

black high schools sought accreditation, their curriculum increasingly resembled that of white high schools. This especially was true for black schools in urban areas. Industrial/vocational coursework remained an integral part of black education and strongly was supported by state officials and local school districts. White high schools also offered vocational coursework during this era. However, for whites, vocational education was but part of a larger high school program. Some southern whites supported the limiting of black schooling to vocational education as a means of maintaining a dual class society.

The classification and accreditation of African-American high schools proceeded rapidly, largely due to the efforts of the State Agent. As greater numbers of high schools for African-American became accredited, the standardization of curriculum increased. Black high school curriculum mirrored that of many white high schools. By 1942, the Texas State Department of Education accredited all high schools, black and white, according to the same criteria (Banks 1962).<sup>24</sup>

### **Curriculum of African-American Schools in Texas**

During the first decades of the 1900s, city high schools for African-Americans offered a traditional academic curriculum similar to the offerings found in white high schools of the era. The curriculum for white high schools was set by the state, first according to the university affiliation system and later by the State Department of Education. Black high schools emulated the curriculum found in white high schools and patterned their programs after these models. At the national level, educators debated the most appropriate type of schooling for African-American youth: vocational or liberal arts.

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<sup>24</sup> The National Association of Teachers of Colored Schools advocated rating black and white high schools according to the same criteria in 1926. However, the concept was not implemented in Texas until 1942 (Trenholm 1932, 34-43).

At the local level, urban black high schools continued to offer a traditional academic curriculum. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, high schools, black and white, incorporated vocational coursework into their curricula. As Texas began classifying and accrediting black high schools, the curriculum of these institutions became aligned with the state standards for accreditation.

In 1882, the *Third Biennial Report* of the State Department of Education noted that Texas high school students were instructed in orthography, reading, penmanship, arithmetic, geography, grammar, composition, history, algebra, geometry, and natural philosophy (State Board of Education 1883). However, the report failed to differentiate courses for white and black students. Given the time period, likely these offerings were for white students. By 1890, the state reported the number of black and white students instructed in several subjects. African-American students received instruction primarily in arithmetic, geography, grammar, composition, and history. A smaller number of students also studied algebra, geometry, natural philosophy, and physiology (State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1893). Subsequent state reports focused greater attention on statistical matters such as enrollment figures and the quantity of teachers' certificates rather than on curriculum listings. Scant existing records provide a glimpse of courses taught in some high schools in the state. The existing information concerning the curriculum of black high schools predominantly came from schools in northern Texas. Likely, schools near the cities of Dallas and Fort Worth were familiar with the offerings of the city schools and sought to emulate their curriculum. At this time, accreditation standards for black schools were less rigorous than were those of white schools. Although the classification and accreditation standards were lower, many high schools seeking accreditation exceeded the state standards. A few existing school district publications from cities and towns throughout Texas provide a glimpse of course offerings in some

high schools for African-American students. Dallas Colored High School taught algebra, geometry, English, ancient and modern history, United States history, and physical geography in 1892. In 1901 the school offered domestic arts and sciences as well as manual training courses (Bellerophon Quill Club of Booker T. Washington High School 1938). By 1915 the school added foreign language study in Latin and German (City of Dallas Public Schools 1915). The city of Denton, Texas, operated a two year high school for black students focused on domestic arts and sciences. “Correlated subjects” included English grammar and rhetoric, United States and Texas history, civil government, mathematics (arithmetic and algebra), and physiology (Denton Public Schools 1911). Central High School in Marshall, Texas, taught courses in mathematics, science, English, Latin, vocal music, history, domestic arts and sciences, manual training, agriculture, and athletics (School Board of the City of Marshall 1912). Similarly, Colored High School in Terrell, Texas, taught a four year sequence of courses including arithmetic, grammar, physiology, agriculture, United States history, algebra, composition and rhetoric, geography, Latin (including Julius Caesar and Cicero), American literature, civics, plane geometry, and physics (*Report and Course of Study of the Terrell Public Schools, Terrell, Texas 1913-1914* 1914). These reports indicate that high schools for African-Americans offered a traditional curriculum similar to that of white schools, despite whites’ support of increased vocational education for black students, rendering the Washington-DuBois debate moot.

By 1922, the State Department of Education published the course requirements for white high schools seeking accreditation.<sup>25</sup> The course list closely paralleled the course listing for the some high schools, such as Terrell Colored High School. Courses

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<sup>25</sup> See *Establishment of Academic Standards for Early Twentieth Century Texas High Schools: The University of Texas Affiliated Schools Program* for an overview of the University of Texas standards for high schools for white students (Lecompte and Davis 2005, 71-84).

included four years of English (including composition, rhetoric, and literature), mathematics (arithmetic, algebra, plane geometry, and trigonometry), American and European history, civics, physiology, and manual training, agriculture, or home economics (Department of Education 1922). No mention was made of the course requirements for African-American students, even though the state began classifying black high schools in 1920. The report did note, however, that the state had attempted to revise the coursework of county training schools. The State Department of Education requested that less attention be focused on Latin, algebra, and rhetoric and more attention be given to fundamental subjects and vocational work (State Department of Education 1925).

By 1926, Texas enrolled 7,377 African-American students in high school (State Department of Education *The Twenty-Fourth Biennial Report* 1926). Figures for African-American students enrolled in specific high school subjects in 1926 revealed that 87% of students studied algebra, 80% enrolled in composition, and 55% studied Latin. Additionally, 42% studied ancient and medieval history, as well as home economics. Many students also took classes in geography, plane geometry, American and English literature, and physiology (State Department of Education *Negro Education in Texas* 1926). Likely, these statistics more closely reflect the course offerings of city high schools for African-Americans inasmuch as the majority of early classified and accredited schools were located in the state's larger cities. State classification requirements did not require schools to offer a foreign language, although many black high schools offered the course and a large number of students enrolled in Latin.

The preceding figures clearly indicate that although the state ardently supported vocational education for African-Americans, black high schools preferred a more classic education. African-American communities needed educated individuals to staff

classrooms, fill pulpits, and treat the ill. These professional positions required college or normal school degrees; thus, students needed quality secondary schooling to enter institutions of higher education (Bullock 1967). Whereas many black high schools offered a conventional curriculum, they did not abandon totally industrial courses. Manual training, domestic arts and sciences, and agriculture continued to appear in the curricular offerings of virtually all black high schools, as well as most white high schools.

City high schools offered a varied, conventional curriculum into the 1930s. Anderson High School in Austin, for example, taught courses in English, history, math, science, Latin, Spanish, home economics, manual training and music during the 1929-1930 school year (Directory-Austin Public Schools 1929-1930 1930). Beginning in 1929, Dallas Negro High School, later renamed Booker T. Washington High School, added courses in journalism, commercial law, bookkeeping, Negro history, and home management (Bellerophon Quill Club of Booker T. Washington High School 1938). Both of these schools appeared on the list of schools which were classified and accredited: Booker T. Washington was accredited in 1925 and Anderson High School earned accreditation in 1926 (State Department of Education *Negro Education in Texas* 1926). Interestingly, black high schools were accredited on the unit system, rather than by individual subjects as were the white high schools. For white high schools, the State Department of Education evaluated the rigor of each individual subject and granted accreditation based on the quality of the course. In black high schools, the agency evaluated the overall quality of a school's academics. In this manner, courses of poorer quality were not isolated and denied accreditation. Consequently, if a school had a reasonably good academic program, the State Department of Education granted accreditation for the entire school, even if some classes did not meet the same standards

that were applied to high schools for white students. This system perpetuated the lower standards required of black schools.

Little information exists concerning the course offerings of rural schools in Texas during this period as many records have been lost or destroyed. Throughout the 1930s and early 1940s, many county training schools became four year academic institutions. Little is known of the impact that this initiative had on existing high schools. Possibly, the addition or enhancement of more high schools created a certain level of competition between schools, leading high schools to enhance coursework and extra-curricular offerings. Beginning with the 1942-1943 school year, Texas accredited rural schools throughout the state. Rural school accreditation was limited to schools that taught no more than 10 grades. State documents listed the rural schools accredited during 1942, but gave no indication of the curriculum that was required for these schools.

Many white educational officials who supported vocational education for blacks believed that blacks were mentally inferior and incapable of completing the same education as white students. They believed that blacks had a peculiar racial need that demanded a differentiated education (Daniel 1932, 277-303). The state encouraged vocational education for high schools educating African-American students well into the 1940s. Between 1930 and 1940, the number of vocational agriculture schools increased by 33, bringing the total for the state to 132. Additionally, 129 teachers were needed to staff the new schools, raising the number of trades and industries teachers in the state to 303 (Davis 1940, 498-503). The biennial reports of the State Department of Education frequently reported the number of students enrolled in agricultural, domestic arts, and manual training programs. It also listed the number of white students enrolled in vocational programs. Due to the economic depression and lack of agricultural knowledge among many farmers, vocational coursework increased for all high school students.

The state reports paid scant attention to the number of African-American students enrolled in traditional academic subjects. An examination of the college entrance requirements for students seeking admission to Texas' black colleges offered a hint of the high school subjects taught in the state. Prairie View State Normal and Industrial College required that students have completed 15 high school credits, eight prescribed and seven elective, for admission. High school students needed four units of English, two units of mathematics, to include algebra and plane geometry, two units of history and civics, and one unit of natural science with a laboratory. In addition to these prescribed units, seven units of electives were required to be chosen from foreign language, social sciences, natural sciences, music, or vocational courses (State Department of Education 1936).

The passage of the Gilmer-Aiken laws in 1949 resulted in the consolidation of many small rural districts in Texas. The number of small high schools decreased as these schools merged to form four year high schools. Larger high schools had greater resources to meet accreditation standards; thus, more black high schools became accredited. To graduate from an accredited high school, students were required to complete 16 academic units: three in English, two in mathematics, two in social studies (including American history and civics), one unit of a laboratory science, and eight additional electives (Hale-Aikin Committee of Twenty-four 1958). The black colleges throughout the state normally required only 15 credits, 8 prescribed and seven electives. Only Prairie View and Butler College required 16 units for admission (*State Department of Education Standards and Activities of the Division of Supervision and Accreditation of School Systems 1948-1949* 1949).

A survey of school districts in Texas revealed that in 1953, most Texas school districts possessed accredited schools. Only 18% of all districts in the state were not

accredited at the elementary or high school levels (Texas Education Agency 1954).<sup>26</sup> In the main, most students in Texas attended accredited schools and were subject to state curricular mandates by the mid 1950s. Students who entered a Texas high school in 1958 were required to complete three units of English, two units of mathematics, and two units of laboratory science. The state permitted students to substitute two years of vocational courses or foreign language for one year of science. For students entering high school in 1959 or later, the standards were more rigorous. Students were required to enroll in four years of English, mathematics, and laboratory sciences, two and one half years of social sciences, in health and physical education and in an adequate number of electives (Hale-Aikin Committee of Twenty-four 1958). Foreign language became an elective rather than a replacement for science. As many colleges required two years of foreign language for admission, students enrolled in these courses but earned elective credit for their efforts.

Throughout the 1900s, urban high schools for black youth offered a traditional academic curriculum, similar to that offered in white high schools. County training schools initially offered a curriculum focused on vocational education and elementary school teacher preparation. As these high schools evolved into four year institutions, the curriculum became more closely aligned with that of traditional four-year schools. The classification and accreditation of black high schools effectively standardized the curricula of these institutions. Little is known of the curricular offerings in the black high schools found in the many small Texas towns. The examination of one such high school in Gonzales, Texas, informs an understanding of the curriculum for a small high town school and how that curriculum changed over time.

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<sup>26</sup> These figures include six special school districts for wayward youth or orphans.

## **Curriculum of Edwards High School 1935-1965**

Little information exists regarding the early curriculum of Edwards High. District records and board minutes offered no information on curriculum, but were replete with financial data. The board of trustees left the matter of curriculum to the school administration; it did not consider it an issue for the school board. Although records recounting the Edwards curriculum are not available, some information was gleaned from supplementary sources. Likely, teachers taught at least some of the subjects on which they were tested for certification. In 1919, Miss Virginia Porter earned a second class state certification. Her exam results indicated that Miss Porter was tested on arithmetic, agriculture, United States history, Texas history, spelling, mathematics, reading, grammar, physics, geography, and writing (Gonzales County Examination Results 1919). The principal of Gonzales Colored School reasonably would have expected Miss Porter to teach the basic subjects, even though she may not have been expected to teach all of the subjects on which she was examined. The 1926 edition of *Negro Education in Texas* listed Gonzales as an accredited three year Negro high school. As such, the school required 16 units for graduation, but they failed to note the individual courses comprising the 16 units.

### **CURRICULUM DURING THE 1930s**

Beginning in the mid 1930s, Edwards High offered a traditional curriculum to its students. Vocational coursework was an integral part of the curriculum, occupying two class periods each day. Although student records listed the courses in which students enrolled, uncertain is content of the courses or the textbooks used.

Although the state reports listed Edwards High as a classified three year high school (grades 9-11), Edwards considered high school to be four years (grades 8-11). The

first student record from Edwards High dated from 1935. The one remaining record indicated that a male student studied English, mathematics, history, and everyday life science during his eighth grade year. The following year, 1936-1937, the young man enrolled in English II, mathematics II, modern history, and biology. English, geometry, history, civics, and Spanish comprised his third year of study. During his final year at Edwards High, the young man studied English, chemistry, Spanish, and physical education. The records of students who entered Edwards during the 1936-1937 school year indicated that during the eighth grade, or first year of high school, students studied English, mathematics, ancient and medieval history, and general science. Students earned one credit for each course they completed successfully. The following year their courses included English, mathematics, modern history, music, science, literature, and physical education. Most students earned a total of four credits for the courses completed during their second year. During their third year the students again enrolled in English, mathematics, and physical education. Student records listed Negro history, Spanish, and civics as part of the junior year curriculum. This was the only year that “Negro History” was listed as a course at Edwards. A former student indicated that she did not have a specific course in “Negro History;” rather teachers infused black history into the other courses throughout the high school years (Oral History Interview with Florence Fryer 2007).<sup>27</sup> During their final year, the students studied English, mathematics, history, and music. Interestingly, female students enrolled in home economics and vocational agriculture, whereas male students studied only vocational agriculture. One possible reason for this was that females in rural areas not only maintained the household, but also assisted with farm work. Males tended the farms, but likely would not have concerned themselves with domestic chores. During their final year of studies, students also

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<sup>27</sup> Florence Fryer graduated from Edwards High in 1951.

received grades for deportment, indicating the school monitored behavior as well as academics.

The courses offered at Edwards High during the mid 1930s resembled the courses listed in the state's 1926 biennial report. Whereas a majority of African-American students in Texas studied algebra, Edwards listed only mathematics and did not articulate the particular mathematics course. Edwards' students likely learned arithmetic, algebra, and geometry during their mathematics courses. English, literature, geography, and home economics courses also matched those listed in the 1926 report. Students at Edwards High enrolled in Spanish rather than Latin, which was noted to be the language most often studied in Texas. Given Gonzales' location in south central Texas, Spanish would have been of more practical use to students.<sup>28</sup> Interestingly, Edwards' students took a course in Negro history which was uncommon at the time. After the 1938-1939 school year, Negro history no longer was listed on student transcripts. Rather the records merely listed "history," perhaps to more closely mirror the curriculum of white high schools.

During the 1930s, classes met five times per week for 45 minutes per session. Classes that met for all 36 weeks of the academic year earned one credit. Classes that met for only half of the year, or 18 weeks, earned only one half of one credit. Classes such as English and literature each met for 18 weeks, accounting for one half of one credit. The credits were combined to comprise one credit of English for the year. Students earned one half of one credit for music and for physical education. Vocational agriculture and home economics were the exception to the rule. Interestingly, vocational classes met for 90 minutes five days each week for the entire year, but students earned only one half of one credit for the class. Students during the 1930s earned an average of four credits each

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<sup>28</sup> A study of graduates from the three African-American high schools in Houston conducted in 1933 noted that graduates requested that Spanish be included in the Houston black school curriculum, likely because many individuals in south Texas were Spanish speakers (Holden 1938, 48-54).

year for a total of 16 credits for graduation, exceeding the state standard for three year high schools.

Teachers at Edwards High School held high expectations for their students. Most Edwards' students earned a grade of C in courses. Fewer students earned Bs or Ds. Teachers awarded grades of A only for exceptional work and few students received this coveted mark.

Between 1935 and 1939, students studied traditional academic courses and vocational subjects, much like students in larger city high schools. Unfortunately, a complete understanding of course content is hindered by a lack of existing records. The grading patterns of the late 1930s continued in the coming decade; however, the coursework was to change.

### **CURRICULUM DURING THE 1940S**

After adding the twelfth grade in 1940, Edwards High became eligible for state accreditation and earned this coveted designation beginning with the 1947-1948 school year. The course offerings at Edwards High changed during the 1940s, likely due to changing state standards. Students' grades improved throughout the decade. As the 1940s waned, Texas issued new curricula for high schools, providing more options for schools to choose curricula that best met their needs.

Beginning in the 1940s, student transcripts listed algebra as the mathematics course studied during students' third year followed by geometry during their fourth year. Also, general science replaced biology in the eighth grade year. After twelfth grade was added at Edwards in 1940, the curriculum changed somewhat. Additionally, Texas issued new requirements for the accreditation of black high schools. Four year high schools now required sixteen units for graduation with a minimum of three units of English, two units each of math and social studies, and one unit of a laboratory science. Although students

needed to complete only one year of a science course, schools were required to offer at least two sciences.

Edwards High eliminated foreign language beginning in the 1940s, but existing records provide no reason for the change. Algebra, English, civics, and general science appeared as core courses during the freshman year for which students earned one credit per subject. Students also attended music, but earned only one half of one credit for successful completion of the course. Algebra II was added during the sophomore year with geometry remaining the mathematics course for students during the junior year. In addition to algebra II, sophomores attended an unspecified history course, English, and biology, earning one credit for each course completed successfully. Home economics or vocational agriculture and music completed students' schedules, but each counted only for one half of one credit. By the 1940s, female students no longer studied vocational agriculture in concert with home economics as they had during the 1930s. Vocational agriculture now was reserved for males and females enrolled in home economics only.

Throughout the first half of the 1940s, students earned credits much as they had during the 1930s. Classes met five times per week for 45 minutes each day. Full year classes counted for one credit and classes that met for half of the year counted for one half of one credit. Vocational agriculture and home economics met for 90 minutes each day of the week and students earned one half of one credit for the classes. Beginning in the fall of 1944, class periods were extended to 60 minutes each day. Classes that met for the entire year continued to count for one credit and half year classes counted for one half of one credit. Vocational courses adhered to the 60 minute class schedule. During the 1948-1949 school year, students earned one full credit for vocational agriculture and home economics classes.

Beginning in the fall of 1949, natural science replaced general science as a freshman requirement. That fall, students also studied American history and had the option to take a course in choral music. Additionally, students enrolled in the standard courses of algebra I, physical education, and a vocational course, either home economics or agriculture. During their sophomore year, these students studied biology and world history. Other courses taken during the second year of high school remained the same as in previous years: algebra II, music, physical education, and a vocational course. Geometry remained a junior course and civics was moved to that year as well. During their senior year students enrolled in English IV, business arithmetic, music, Texas history, physical education, and a vocational course. The courses completed by Edwards' students during the 1940s qualified them for admission to most of the black colleges in the state.

Students earned higher grades in their courses during the second half of the 1940s than they had in previous years. Although C continued to be the most common grade, many more students received grades of A and B. As may be expected, students who earned low marks in one course, tended to earn lower marks in many classes. Students who earned higher marks in one course performed well in several classes.

The State Board of Education delineated four different curricula that a school might follow: a standard academic curriculum, a standard commercial curriculum, a standard vocational curriculum, and a standard academic curriculum for small towns or rural high schools (State Department of Education 1941). During the 1940s, the Edwards High curriculum was a hybridization of the standard and small town academic curricula. Both of the plans called for four years of English, which Edwards' students completed. Like the standard academic curriculum, Edwards' students completed two years of algebra and one year of plane geometry. They also studied general science and biology.

Instead of two years of foreign language, Edwards High students completed physical education and music as called for in the small town standard curriculum. Additionally, they enrolled in Texas history during their senior year and studied a vocational course each year, either home economics or vocational agriculture.

Throughout the 1940s, Edwards High followed state standards for curriculum, changing its course offerings as necessary. The length of the course periods changed as well. By the end of the decade, the State Department of Education offered several curricula from which high schools might choose. High schools had the option to choose the curriculum that best met the needs of their students. Edwards High chose not to adopt one a single curriculum from those listed, rather they created a curriculum that merged two of the offerings. The hybridized curriculum satisfied the State Department of Education and Edwards High retained its accredited status. In the coming years, Edwards High would follow the changing standards of the state and increase the rigor of its academic program.

## **CURRICULUM DURING THE 1950S**

During the 1950s, Edwards High increased the number of credits required for graduation and added foreign language to its curriculum. Greater numbers of students successfully completed courses. After the passage of the National Defense Education Act in 1959, requirements for math and science courses increased and students entering Edwards High at the end of the decade earned more credits than had any previous class of students.

Throughout the 1950s, Edwards High School continued to expand its curricular offerings while maintaining the courses required for accreditation. Incoming students experienced a stable curriculum between 1947 and 1950. Beginning in the fall of 1950, Edwards High eliminated world history during the freshman year. Instead, students

studied choral music or band. Students who entered Edwards High during the 1952-1953 school year no longer studied science during their freshman year. During their senior year, students studied a course titled advanced arithmetic as called for in the state's academic curriculum. However, they also had the opportunity to enroll in typing during their senior year. Advanced arithmetic and typing each were a one credit class and males and females enrolled in both courses. Prior to this, Edwards offered no business or commercial classes. Band appeared on student transcripts for the incoming class of 1953-1954.

In the fall of 1955, several changes occurred in the curriculum. Typing became an elective class which students could take during their freshman or junior years. Students who wished to enroll in band or chorus during their freshman year often studied typing during their junior year. In addition to their elective class, freshmen enrolled in English, mathematics, a vocational course, and physical education. Students earned one unit of credit for each class except for physical education which was one half of a credit. Most students earned four or four and one half credits during their freshman year. During their sophomore year, students studied English/literature, world history, biology, algebra, a vocational class, and physical education. Most students earned between five and one half and six credits. During their junior year, students enrolled in geometry, American history, English/literature, a music class, a vocational class, and physical education. During their senior year, students were not required to complete a vocational class as had been the case in previous years. In 1956, Edwards added American government to the senior course requirements and dropped Texas history. The following year, one semester of trigonometry replaced one semester of advanced arithmetic. This change did not alter the unit credit, merely the contents of the course.

Throughout the 1950s, classes met five days per week for 60 minutes each. As during the 1940s, full year classes earned students one full credit and half year classes earned students one half of a credit. Students earned one half of a credit for choral music and for physical education. Interestingly, band students earned one full credit for the class.

Students continued to earn more grades of C than any other mark. During the 1950s, the number of A and B grades increased and the amount of failing grades decreased. Beginning in the mid 1940s and extending through the 1950s, Edwards High students earn far more than the 16 credits required for graduation. Most students earned between 20 and 23 credits prior to graduation.

The State Board of Education changed the graduation requirements for students entering high school in the fall of 1958. In addition to the three units of English and two units of math that had been required previously, students now were required to earn two and one half credits of social studies to include one unit of American history, one half unit of world history, and one half unit of government. Students also were required to complete two units of laboratory science (Hale-Aikin Committee of Twenty-four 1958). The state provided the option for students to complete two years of foreign language or vocational courses in lieu of one year of science. Edwards High's curriculum met the new standards without the substitution of vocational or foreign language courses since biology and chemistry were taught as laboratory sciences at Edwards. Students continued to enroll in vocational classes during their first three years of high school. Students who entered Edwards High in 1958 studied Spanish, rather than music, during their senior year of high school. Although the school did not offer choral music as an academic class, many students participated in the school's choral clubs.

Kuehlem noted that in 1959, the State Board of Education imposed new graduation standards as a result of the passage of the National Defense Education Act. This legislation, passed in response to the Soviet Union's launching of Sputnik, increased funding for math, science, and foreign language education (Kuehlem 2004). District financial records provided no evidence that Edwards High School received any of the additional funds issued by the state. Students who entered high school in the fall of 1959 needed "four years of English, four years of mathematics, four years of laboratory science, two and one-half years of social sciences, an adequate program of health and physical education, and enough elective courses to provide alternatives for pupils" (Hale-Aikin Committee of Twenty-four 1958, 2). Students at Edwards who began high school in the fall of 1959 completed the required four years of English and mathematics, two and one half years of social science, physical education and health, and had electives such as study hall, chorus, and band. The class that entered in 1959 did not complete four years of science; rather, they completed only biology and chemistry. They also completed three years of vocational courses and two years of Spanish. Students posted poor grades in Spanish during 1958 and 1959. Many students earned a grade of D in the course and only one student earned a grade of A. The class that entered in 1959 earned lower grades during their senior year than had previous graduating classes. This fact is not surprising in light of the rigorous academic load that seniors carried. During their final year of high school the students enrolled in Spanish II, civics and Texas History, trigonometry and advanced arithmetic, chemistry, English IV, and physical education for a total of six credits. This was more credits than any previous class carried during their senior year. Additionally, students during the 1950s participated in more extra-curricular activities than had previous classes.

Throughout the 1950s, Edwards High expanded and increased the academic rigor of the curriculum. Students earned more credits in social studies, math, and foreign language. They increased the amount of academic courses while continuing coursework in vocational classes and physical education. Music, typing, chorus, and band continued to offer students choices for their elective classes.

Students who entered Edwards High during the 1950s witnessed several changes to the school's curriculum. Additionally, these students earned more course credits and participated in more extra-curricular activities than had previous students who attended the school. In the coming decade, students would have additional course offerings from which to choose and would receive more guidance in selecting courses.

## **CURRICULUM DURING THE 1960s**

Beginning in the early 1960s, Edwards High provided its students with materials to plan the coursework they would pursue during their high school years based on their future goals. Class periods were shortened and students attended more classes each day, resulting in increased instructional time.

The curriculum of the early 1960s remained the same as that of the 1959-1960 school year. The students continued to meet the requirements for four years of English and mathematics, two and one half years of social science, physical education and health, and elective courses. Edwards High never transformed the curriculum to meet the requirement of four years of science and no reasons were given for the deficiency. Likely, the school had neither the resources nor the personnel to accommodate the change. During the 1964-1965 school year, students had the option to complete a second year of Spanish or to study shorthand during their senior year. Additionally, algebra II replaced advanced arithmetic and trigonometry as the senior math class. Surprisingly, the senior's grades did not improve after they received the option to study shorthand instead of

Spanish II. Edwards High was not removed from the list of accredited high schools despite its deficiency in science.

By 1961, Edwards High implemented a guidance program to help students navigate the curriculum. Students received a “Planning Toward Graduation” packet that listed course offerings for the seventh through twelfth grades. The school provided students with a sample schedule for those students interested in pursuing a college preparatory program and a separate sample schedule for a business curriculum plan for students not planning to attend college. The college preparatory program called for four years of English, mathematics, and science, two years of social studies, one year of Spanish, and four years of physical education. The plan suggested that students who were interested in pursuing math or science fields should complete three years of science, to include biology, chemistry and physics. However, physics was never listed on any transcripts as an available class. Students following the college preparatory plan had one elective course of their choosing during their senior year (Planning Toward Graduation 1961).

The business curriculum plan suggested that students complete four years of English and physical education, three years of social studies, and two years of science, to include general science and biology. Students studied typing and bookkeeping during their junior year and then spent two class periods a day in secretarial training during their senior year. Additionally, students had five semesters of electives from which they might choose (Planning Toward Graduation 1961).

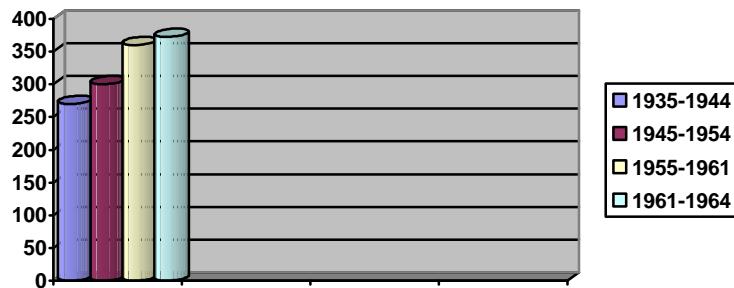
The “Planning Toward Graduation” packet outlined graduation requirements for students entering Edwards High in the fall of 1961. Each student was required to accrue 24 credits, to be earned at a rate of six per year. General requirements included three years of English, social science, and physical education, two years of mathematics and

science, and one year of health education. Students had 10 additional elective courses to complete prior to graduation. Below the listing of the graduation requirements for Edwards High were college entrance requirements: four years of English and physical education, three years of math and social science, and two years of science and foreign language. By having these contrasting requirements on the same page, Edwards' students clearly could see the coursework that colleges required was more rigorous than that required for high school graduation. The packet further delineated the requirements of Prairie View A&M College, Texas Southern University, Texas College, and Huston-Tillotson College. The final page of the packet counseled students on how to plan their schedules and how to decide if college was appropriate for them. Interestingly, the school warned students that those who carried less than a B average rarely succeeded in college (Planning Toward Graduation 1961). In light of the fact that C was the most common grade for Edwards High School students, it is not surprising that few students chose to pursue college educations.

During the 1961-1962 school year, classes continued to meet five times per week. The length of each period varied, however. Biology and English/United States literature met for 60 minutes. Algebra and vocational classes met for 58 minutes in 1961-1962; however, in 1962-1963 vocational classes and physical education met for 57 minutes and American history was afforded 58 minutes. Geometry, English, and Spanish convened for 60 minutes. The length of periods changed again in the fall of 1964. English, chemistry, and physical education met for 57 minutes. Advanced mathematics (solid geometry and trigonometry), American government, band, algebra II, and Texas history lasted for 55 minutes. Although records provided no explanation for the change, a likely reason for the shortened class periods was that students attended more classes during the school day. As the hours of the school day remained relatively constant, the only way the school could

add more class periods was to reduce the meeting time for each class. Students of the 1960s earned between five and six credits per year rather than the four credits that students earned during the 1930s. Instructional time increased from 270 minutes per day in the 1930s to an average of 372 minutes per day in 1964.<sup>29</sup>

Figure 5.1: Instructional Minutes per Week 1935-1965<sup>a</sup>



<sup>a</sup>(Edwards High Student Records 1935-1966)

During the early 1960s, Edwards High continued to adjust its curriculum to meet changing state standards. Prior to its closing in 1965, Edwards High School offered students a rigorous academic curriculum and a full complement of extra-curricular activities. Additionally, the school provided counseling to assist students in choosing the curricular path that would enable them to accomplish their future goals

## **Summary and Conclusion**

During the era of segregated education, African-Americans wanted the schools for their youth to provide the best possible education. The most outstanding schools at that time were schools for whites. Beginning in the early 1900s, white high schools became affiliated with the University of Texas. Later, these high schools were accredited by the State Department of Education. Black Texans wanted the same level of education

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<sup>29</sup> The average instructional time during the period between 1961 and 1964 was 372. Students' in-class time ranged from 353 minutes to 391 minutes.

for their high school aged children as that provided for white students. Consequently, early African-American high schools modeled their curriculum after the curriculum of white high schools (Anderson 1988). Initially, most of the high schools were located in the larger cities of Texas. Likely, the curriculum of these city high schools influenced the curriculum of the high schools located in smaller towns.

The curriculum of Edwards High School changed greatly between 1935 and 1965. During this time, course requirements became academically more rigorous. As Texas increased its standards for high school accreditation, high schools adjusted their curriculum to meet the new state standards. The number of electives increased at Edwards High, offering students a varied array of courses in which they might enroll. Additionally, instructional time increased from 270 minutes to 372 minutes per day between 1935 and 1965. All of these factors served to improve the quality of the education that students received at Edwards High.

Although student records list the names of the classes taught at Edwards, these names do not indicate sufficiently the nature of the course of study. English I was taught as a freshman course at Edwards and currently is taught in most high schools. Likely the content of modern English I classes differ from the content of English I classes taught in 1940 or in 1960. Course names changed over time at Edwards. Possibly the change was in name only and the content of some courses remained the same. For example, when natural science replaced general science for ninth grade students in 1949, did the actual material taught change? The lack of information regarding the course of study for classes at Edwards High hinders a more complete understanding of how Edwards' curriculum changed over time.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS**

From the late 1800s through the mid 1960s, Edwards High School educated African-American students in the town of Gonzales, Texas, and the surrounding countryside. The research on Edwards High School focused on four areas: 1) resources, 2) students, 3) faculty, and 4) curriculum. Edwards High School never achieved parity with Gonzales High School with regard to facilities or equipment. Despite the dearth of resources, the faculty and administration of Edwards High School were educated, dedicated, and caring individuals committed to students' success. Students valued their experience at Edwards High and appreciated the efforts of their teachers. Edwards High offered students a traditional academic curriculum, as well as vocational courses. The curriculum changed over time and became academically more rigorous due, in large part, to state standards for classification and accreditation.

Throughout the years Edwards High School continually received an inequitable share of the district's available financial resources. Although Texas disbursed an annual allotment to school districts based on the number of children enrolled in and attending school, the local board of trustees determined how that money was utilized within the district. In Gonzales, the schools for white children received a greater share of financial resources. When new materials were purchased for the Gonzales High School, the replaced items (desks, sewing machines, books, etc.) often were sent to Edwards High School. Due to whites' prejudicial attitudes toward African-Americans in Gonzales, the board failed to acknowledge the needs of Edwards' students. The disparity of resources also was evident in the salaries paid to teachers in the district. African-American teachers

received lower pay even when their credentials and experience equaled or exceeded that of white teachers. Although the Texas Legislature codified the equalization of teacher salaries in 1949, Gonzales ISD circumvented the system until the 1957-1958 school year when new legislation mandated equal pay for teachers in all school districts in Texas. The inequity of distribution of resources between white and black schools in the Gonzales Independent School district demonstrated that the dual system of education present during the Jim Crow era inherently was unequal.

Many of the students who attended Edwards High School lived in the town of Gonzales; however, slightly more of the students lived in the rural areas surrounding the town. Throughout the period of the study, more females than males attended the school. The percentage of students who graduated from the high school increased over time. Whereas only 60% of students who attended the school during the 1930s graduated, by the 1960s, more than 90% of students who entered the school graduated. The students at Edwards High appreciated the efforts of their teachers and valued their experiences at Edwards High. Due to desegregation of the high schools, students lost many of the attributes of high school that enriched their experience. They lost a familiar building when Edwards was closed. They also lost their identity of being gophers, for after desegregation they were forced to adopt the mascot of Gonzales High School, the Apache. Students lost familiar teachers since only a very few teachers from Edwards were transferred to Gonzales High. Sadly, the former Edwards High students were not welcomed into extra-curricular activities at Gonzales High School for several years. Although the students of Edwards High gained greater access to resources when the high schools were desegregated, they lost much of what had made their high school experience special.

The cadre of teachers at Edwards High was comprised dedicated and caring individuals who provided a quality education for their students and assisted them in navigating the difficulties of segregated society. The teachers of Edwards High consistently earned greater numbers of first class or permanent certificates than did the average African-American teacher in the state. The faculty at Edwards generally attended one of the historically black college and universities in Texas. Over time, an increasing number of teachers enrolled in graduate studies, often out of state, to enhance their teaching skills. The majority of Edwards' were from the Gonzales area and many were alumni of the school. Other teachers had family members who attended the institution. These familial relationships created strong bonds between the teachers and students. By providing needed community services, participating in community events, and inviting the African-American community in Gonzales to participate in special school events, the teachers of Edwards High forged strong ties with the black community in Gonzales.

The principals of the Edwards High often were not lifelong residents of the town. Many came from other areas of Texas, from other states, or attended educational institutions in other regions of the country. These men brought experiences and new ideas to Gonzales and shared them with the faculty, enriching the education of Edwards' students.

Edwards High School provided a traditional academic curriculum for students. Vocational education was an integral part of the curriculum, as it was in white high schools of the period. The curriculum changed over time due, in large part, to the changing accreditation standards in Texas. The changes in course offerings resulted in an academically more rigorous curriculum for students. Not only did the academic curriculum change over time, but also the extra-curriculum of the school changed. Students had very limited choices for extra-curricular activities during the 1930s, but by

the 1950s the school provided an array of clubs, sports activities, and academic competitions in which students might participate. Through the years, the number of students who participated in extra-curricular offerings increased as well. By the time Edwards High School closed in 1965, almost all students enrolled in at least six classes per year and participated in numerous extra-curricular activities.

The prejudicial attitudes of the white community of Gonzales were evident throughout the history of the Edwards High School. The Gonzales ISD school board denied Edwards High needed facilities, resources, and materials for the education of the town's black youth. Black parents were ignored or dismissed when they approached the board to obtain better conditions for their children. Whites in Gonzales maintained segregation in all possible situations. Edwards' students obtained the ability the use of Apache Field, located several blocks from Gonzales High School, on days when no white students or parents would be present. Board members refused to participate in dedication celebrations for Edwards' new gymnasium with the families of Edwards' students. The interactions between the black community at Edwards High and the white community maintained the dual class system; one in which whites were dominant and blacks were subservient.

Although much was learned from this study, one fundamental question remains. Was Edwards High School an anomaly in Texas, or was it but one example of many such schools which operated throughout the state? Research remains to be completed on individual schools which operated in the small towns and rural areas of Texas. This research on small town and rural schools would inform a greater understanding of secondary education for African-Americans in Texas during the twentieth century.

## **EPILOGUE**

### **EDWARDS TODAY**



Illustration E.1: Edwards High School 2006

Edwards School was used by the city as a storage facility until Mr. Winston Fryer, a 1950 graduate of the school, approached the city about leasing the structure to the alumni of Edwards. A group of alumni formed the Edwards Association and after many negotiating sessions, convinced the city to lease the Edwards' property to them. The alumni association worked lovingly to restore the main school building as funds permitted and has revitalized the facility. They host recreational basketball in the gym and provide after school tutoring in the main school house. The homemaking cottage and other temporary structures long since have been removed from the Edwards property. The vocational agriculture building remains city property.

Edwards High stands today as a reminder of a dark time in American history when children of color were denied equal access to educational opportunities and resources; yet it remains a testament to the tenacious spirit of the many students who

passed through its doors seeking an education and to the teachers who tirelessly provided the education which helped students navigate the discriminatory era of Jim Crow and prepared students for the time when racial barriers would be destroyed.

## Appendix



Pix I.D. Opposite page: Everyone of us know of the little someone closest to his heart, his granddaughter, Casandra. We have also heard about his friendly turtle who has visited him each year for 15 years. Top: This is a picture from his earliest years of teaching. The most common site of Mr. Smith is in the midst of his students.

Jesse Smith is one of the greatest men we shall ever know. We have felt his greatness in his love for us and we have seen it demonstrated in his love of God, his fellow man and his Country.

As a master teacher, Mr. Smith has made every day a day of learning with an emphasis on individual discovery. Without leaving the classroom he has woven the chemistry and physics of our very existence into the tapestry of our lives. He always has a warm greeting for us, and an optimistic forecast on the day.

His educational degrees and certificates fill the pages of more than one book. His credentials were awarded at colleges and universities from coast to coast. Educators from all across the South have sought his counsel and many have tried to entice him to their districts.

Possibly no other man in our community has been as lauded as Jesse Smith. Every major organization in Gonzales has been touched by his intellect and interest. What more can one be to a community than Man of the Year.

He is head of the Science Department and holds, among others, the distinction of holding a perfect attendance record in the Gonzales Independent School District of 31 years.

We want him to know that he is held in the greatest esteem with the deepest affection.

The magnificent play, Camelot, closes with Arthur saying . . . "we are less than a drop in the great blue motion of the sunlit sea. But some of the drops do sparkle, they really do sparkle." Jesse Smith does sparkle and did, indeed, add that special sparkle to our sunlit years . . . sparkle that will never dim.

Illustration A.1: 1981 *Lexington* Dedication to Jesse Smith (Courtesy of Gonzales Independent School District)

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