

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION

ESTABLISHED UNDER

ASSEMBLY CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 22, 1955,

N.J. Commission TO STUDY THE PROPOSED DISCONTINUANCE

OF

BORDENTOWN MANUAL TRAINING SCHOOL

TO

THE NEW JERSEY LEGISLATURE

JUNE 1, 1955

PROPERTY OF

RECEIVED

JUN 23 1955

**DIVISION OF STATE LIBRARY,
ARCHIVES AND HISTORY
TRENTON**

974.90

5372 copy 3

1955b

TO THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY

There is herewith submitted the report of the Commission established under Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 22, 1955, to study the proposed discontinuance of the Bordentown Manual Training School.

Senator Albert McCay, Chairman

Senator W. Howard Sharp

Senator Richard R. Stout

Assemblyman Edward T. Bowser, Sr.

Assemblyman C. William Haines

Assemblyman Harold V. Ritter

Pursuant to ACR #22 this Commission was charged with the duties of studying and investigating "(a) the methods of provision of an adequate State sponsored program of vocational training, (b) the advisability of the proposed discontinuance of the Bordentown Manual Training School as recommended by the State Board of Education, (c) the adequacy of administrative efforts made to effect integration in the operation of Bordentown Manual Training School within the policy of the State as set forth in its Constitution and statutes, (d) ways and means of adapting Bordentown Manual Training School to provide for the current need for a vocational training school on an integrated basis." The Commission was further obligated to report its findings and recommendations to the Legislature not later than June 1, 1955.

The resolution establishing this Commission was not passed until May 2, 1955 and the members of the Commission were not appointed until that date. In order to complete its report by June 1, the Commission was forced to concentrate its study and investigation on sub-paragraphs (b) and (c), the advisability of the proposed

discontinuance of the Bordentown Manual Training School as recommended by the State Board of Education and the adequacy of administrative efforts made to effect integration in the operation of that school.

In the course of its investigation, the members of the Commission met with Mr. Joseph E. Clayton and Dr. Frank B. Stover of the Department of Education, in the absence of the Commissioner of Education, on May 12. In addition to discussing the situation of the Bordentown School the members were furnished by the Department of Education with considerable data concerning the history, operation, and cost of the school as well as reports of various committees of the State Board of Education which have investigated the future of the Manual Training School. On May 17 the members of the Commission, with the cooperation of the Department of Education, visited the Bordentown School. They surveyed the physical plant at Bordentown with Superintendent Joseph Segear and conferred there with Kenneth F. Woodbury of the Department of Education. They were also able to talk with many of the teachers, clerical staff, and other employees and staff. On May 19 the Commission held a public

hearing on the question. Numerous representatives of the Bordentown alumni and other interested groups were present as well as members of the State Board of Education and the Superintendent of the Bordentown School, Joseph Segear.

The recommendation that the Bordentown Manual Training School be closed was embodied in the following resolution passed by the State Board of Education on December 17, 1954:

"WHEREAS: The New Jersey State Constitution adopted in 1947, which became effective January 1, 1948, provided that no person shall be segregated in the public schools because of religious principles, race, color, ancestry, or national origin, and

WHEREAS: The State Legislature, upon recommendation of the State Board of Education in 1948, provided by law that the Manual Training and Industrial School for Youth at Bordentown should be open to all children of the State; and

WHEREAS: Despite efforts to integrate the school there has in fact remained a separation of Negro children in said school which is, therefore, a segregated school in its practical operation, and

WHEREAS: The Supreme Court, in its recent historical decision, has reemphasized that such separation has a tendency to retard the educational and mental development of Negro children and to deprive them of some of the benefits they would receive in a racially integrated school system, to all of which principles the State Board of Education has always subscribed, and does now subscribe, and

WHEREAS: A Special committee of the State Board of Education has made a careful study of the Manual Training School at Bordentown and has made a recommendation to the Board that the School be closed effective June 30, 1955, and further recommended that the State Board of Education empower the Commissioner of Education to take the necessary steps to secure the approval of the Governor and Legislature to accomplish this recommendation and to notify all administrative staff, faculty, and other employees concerned of the contemplated action of the State Board of Education to maintain a sufficient staff to care for the buildings and grounds after June 30, 1955, pending the disposition of the plant and facilities by the State Board of Education, and to notify all outside agencies which have used the facilities at Bordentown that the school will be closed, and to offer to these agencies the use of other schools or colleges operated by the

State Board of Education for purposes of holding such meetings as have been held at the Bordentown school.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the State Board of Education hereby declares that the Manual Training School at Bordentown should be discontinued effective June 30, 1955, and that the recommendations of the special committee concerning the steps to be taken in closing the school be adopted as the policy of the State Board of Education."

The sole ground on which the State Board of Education

recommended that the Bordentown Manual Training School be closed

was the fact that despite its having been opened to all children

of the State, it remained in fact a school composed completely of

Negro children and despite efforts at integration of white children

into this school there had been a notable lack of success. Thus,

the State Board of Education recommended the elimination of what

it termed "a segregated school in its practical operation", in order

to conform with the New Jersey State Constitution and the recent

decision of the United States Supreme Court concerning racially

segregated school systems.

This Commission cannot support the resolution of the

State Board of Education basing the proposed discontinuance of the

Bordentown Manual Training School upon the fact that it is a non-

integrated school and that it is, in effect, incapable of integration.

The Commission recognizes that there are some distinct problems

connected with integrating this particular school, including the inability to transfer students and faculty from this school to other similar schools, the voluntary basis upon which students attend the school and the infrequent vacancies in faculty and clerical positions. Despite the statement of Superintendent Segear as to the efforts which were made by himself and others to attract white students to the school, the Commission feels that efforts toward this end were relatively insubstantial. Statements by teachers, the assistant superintendent and other alumni and employees of Bordentown to the effect that they were unaware of efforts being made toward integration, are damaging evidence concerning the sufficiency of the integration program. Furthermore, there was apparently no effort made to obtain the assistance of specialists concerning this problem, such as sociologists, social workers, or even the Department of Education's own Division Against Discrimination. The Commission is also dubious as to how extensive or effective a program to achieve integration could have been against the background of a recommendation as far back as 1953 by a committee of the State Board of Education that the school should be discontinued following commencement in 1956 and

the process of gradual discontinuance of the school which eliminated the course of study in the 8th grade and the services of the full time public relations officer of the school. The services of a capable individual in a public relations position for the school should have been able to aid considerably a program aimed at integration.

It appears to the Commission that harmonious relations between the various races and peoples of the state as well as of the country should not be jeopardized by a decision of this type without the most extensive diligence and examination of the problem, and an utmost effort to effect its solution. With the recent decision of the Supreme Court focusing national and international attention upon the progress of equality of races within the educational systems of the country, and establishing the dicta that it shall work, it is of even more consequence that this decision closing a school because integration of races cannot be made to work should be carefully scrutinized. The seriousness of the problem of integration of schools, completely apart from the Bordentown situation, places the burden of proof upon the State Board of Education in a decision closing an existing school due to failure to effect integration.

The arguments of the State Board and the Department of Education have not, in the opinion of the Commission, proved that integration of the school at Bordentown cannot be achieved and that all feasible and reasonable efforts towards accomplishing integration have heretofore been exhausted.

As we cannot support the resolution of the State Board of Education, the attention of the Department of Education is called to Section 18:16-8 et. seq. of the Revised Statutes, which states in part that " 'The Manual Training and Industrial School for Youth', located at Bordentown shall be conducted and managed by the Commissioner of Education, subject to the approval of the State Board." Since the fact of operation of this school has been prescribed by statute, it requires a statute to terminate it. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the Commissioner of Education and the State Board of Education to continue the operation of the school until such time as the Legislature may provide for its discontinuance by statute.

In the course of the study and investigation on the part of the Commission, there were various factors concerning the operation of the Bordentown Manual Training School which came to the attention of the members. Much of the data concerning the advisability of state

operation of a vocational training school, increased facilities for vocational training in the various counties, the per capita cost at Bordentown and the inadequacy of the equipment available for use at that school tended to impress the members of the Commission as perhaps presenting more substantial evidence that the Bordentown School should be discontinued as a Manual Training School. At the same time that the Commission wishes that these facets of the Bordentown operation should be further investigated, it is also desirous that investigation should be made into modernization of the Bordentown plant and equipment, and the per capita cost, etc., which would result from a modernized Bordentown Manual Training School operating on an integrated basis at maximum student capacity.

The commission is mindful of the possibility that further investigation into the state operation of Bordentown as a manual training school may well provide sufficient grounds for seriously considering the discontinuance of its use for that purpose. Thus the Commission believes that it should be reconstituted with broadened powers and duties to receive the information sought from the Department of Education, and in the case that the further use of Bordentown as a manual training school should be negated, to consider

and investigate the various alternatives which may present themselves for the utilization of the Bordentown plant and facilities for educational purposes.

Therefore, the Commission recommends:

- (1) That the resolution of the State Board of Education recommending the discontinuance of the Bordentown Manual Training School solely on the basis of failure and impossibility of integration be rejected.
- (2) That the Department of Education be directed by resolution of the Legislature to study and investigate fully the operation of the Bordentown Manual Training School with respect to the cost of the operation of the school, the adequacy of the training and facilities offered there, the ability of existing and planned county vocational schools to meet the recognized need for such training and the role of the State in furnishing vocational schools.

(3) That the Department of Education be directed by resolution of the Legislature to investigate and study the needs and cost of modernizing the plant and facilities at Bordentown for its present use, including a study of the cost of such a modernized school operated on an integrated basis at maximum student capacity.

(4) That the present commission studying the Bordentown Manual Training School be reconstituted in order to receive and study the additional data concerning the operation of the school, and given the additional power and duty to consider alternatives for the utilization of the plant and facilities for educational purposes, should the continuance of Bordentown as a manual training school be considered unfavorably.

To accomplish these recommendations the Commission

is submitting an appropriate resolution to the Legislature.