

Dr. Dorothy Bendross-Mindingall, Board Member

SUBJECT: ENDORSEMENT COMMEMORATING THE 63RD ANNIVERSARY OF THE BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION OF TOPEKA

COMMITTEE: INNOVATION, GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

LINK TO STRATEGIC

BLUEPRINT: INFORMED, ENGAGED AND EMPOWERED STAKEHOLDERS

On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court unanimously decided in *Brown v. Board of Education* declaring that the separation of children in public schools based on race is a violation of the 14th Amendment of the United States Constitution. This decision ended the doctrine of "separate but equal" schools declared in the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* case. The decision rendered the system of legal segregation in public schools unconstitutional.

Prior to *Plessy v. Ferguson* and the first Civil Rights Act [1866], African-American parents challenged our country's system of education that mandated separate schools for children based on race. In 1849, *Roberts v. City of Boston* was heard by the Massachusetts Supreme Court. Roberts was represented by attorneys Charles Sumner, who went on to become a United States Senator, and Robert Morris, an African-American activist and abolitionist. Roberts was unsuccessful because, the state cited, provisions had been made for "colored" students to have a school.

Almost a year following the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown*, then Florida Attorney General Richard Ervin submitted an *amicus curiae* brief proposing gradual integration. Acting Governor Charles Johns enlisted the Attorney General [Ervin], State Superintendent of Education Thomas D. Bailey, and Florida State University sociologist Lewis Killian, to submit a report outlining the "practical problems involved [with desegregation] and recommendations" for implementation. The study showed a number of issues associated including refusal to employ Negro teachers for mixed schools and difficulty obtaining white teachers. The report concluded that 75% of Blacks supported the *Brown* decision while whites thought that Blacks largely supported segregation.

Almost a decade after the *Brown* decision, many school districts throughout Florida remained segregated. In 1958, a lawsuit was filed against Miami-Dade County School Board by six plaintiffs. The lawsuit was unsuccessful because of Florida's *Pupil Assignment Law* and that the district was required to enforce the state law until they are repealed, suppressed, or held invalid by the courts. In 1959, Miami-Dade County Public Schools was the first to take steps to desegregate but it took almost 40 years of litigation until the federal court finally declared the District "unitary" and relinquished jurisdiction back to the School Board in 2002.

ACTION PROPOSED BY

DR. BENDROSS-MINDINGALL:

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, endorse the 63rd Anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*.