

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA

**SESSION 2007
RATIFIED BILL**

**RESOLUTION 2008-16
HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 2794**

**A JOINT RESOLUTION COMMEMORATING THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF
PUBLIC SCHOOL INTEGRATION IN NORTH CAROLINA.**

Whereas, the 1954 *Brown v. the Board of Education* decision of the United States Supreme Court declared that public schools legally segregated by race were and are unconstitutional; and

Whereas, *Brown v. the Board of Education* also declared that separate White, Negro, and Indian schools in North Carolina and other states should be eliminated with "all deliberate speed"; and

Whereas, in response to the *Brown* decision, officials in North Carolina debated the issue of public school integration through executive, legislative, judicial, and constitutional amendment procedures; and

Whereas, a special session of the General Assembly was called in the summer of 1956 to respond to the recommendations of the Pearsall Commission; and

Whereas, in September of 1956, a set of constitutional amendment proposals were approved by the voting citizens of North Carolina, thus substantially inhibiting and delaying the impact of the *Brown* decision; and

Whereas, local school superintendents Dr. Benjamin Smith, Dr. Elmer Garinger, and Dr. Craig Phillips worked with school boards and community leaders in Greensboro, Charlotte, and Winston-Salem to facilitate the era of public school integration during the summer of 1957; and

Whereas, on September 4, 1957, Josephine Boyd (Bradley) at Greensboro Senior High School along with Brenda Florence, Jimmy Florence, Russell Herring, Elijah Herring, and Harold Davis at Gillespie Park Elementary School integrated the previously all-white public schools in Greensboro; and

Whereas, on September 4, 1957, Dorothy Counts (Scoggins) at Harding Senior High School, Gustevas Roberts at Central Senior High School, Girvaud Roberts (Justice) at Piedmont Junior High School, and Delois Huntley at Alexander Graham Junior High School integrated the previously all-white public schools in Charlotte; and

Whereas, on September 4, 1957, Gwendolyn Bailey (Coleman) integrated the previously all-white Reynolds High School in Winston-Salem; and

Whereas, in the book, *Greensboro: A Chosen Center*, historian Gayle Fripp indicates that Gillespie Park Elementary School became the first integrated elementary school in the southeastern United States; and

Whereas, on June 4, 1958, Josephine Boyd (Bradley) of Greensboro Senior High and Ernest Green of Little Rock (AR) Central High School became the first two African-American students to graduate from previously all-white high schools in the South; and

Whereas, many different versions of school integration evolved across the State during the decade of the 1960s; and

Whereas, full-scale public school integration finally became the operational practice for all of North Carolina's public school districts by 1970; and

Whereas, monumental progress has been realized in the continuing quest for equal educational opportunities for North Carolina's school children; and

Whereas, 2007-2008 marks the 50th anniversary of the historic 1957-1958 school year; Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives, the Senate concurring:

SECTION 1. The North Carolina General Assembly wishes to commemorate the ongoing progress toward equity and to recognize the bravery that was demonstrated by North Carolinians from multiple ethnic groups a half century ago.

SECTION 2. The General Assembly honors the memory of Dr. Benjamin Smith, Dr. Elmer Garinger, Russell Herring, Elijah Herring, Harold Davis, and Gustavas Roberts for their roles in helping to integrate North Carolina's schools in 1957.

SECTION 3. The Secretary of State shall transmit a certified copy of this resolution to the families of the integration pioneers mentioned in this resolution.

SECTION 4. This resolution is effective upon ratification.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 26th day of June, 2008.

Beverly E. Perdue
President of the Senate

Joe Hackney
Speaker of the House of Representatives