**Determining the Facts 2:**

**South Carolina's School Equalization Program**

One major result of the Clarendon County petitions was that South Carolina decided to build new schools across the state. The new governor of South Carolina, James Byrnes, began his duties in 1951 and he knew that the NAACP could prove that black and white schools were not equal in South Carolina. So, Byrnes developed a program to build new schools for both white and African American children. The new schools were called "equalization schools" because the state built them to comply with the "separate but equal" policy.

The State Educational Finance Commission (EFC) was in charge of the school building and improving program. The commission purchased new school buses to bring both black and white students to school. The program designed modern buildings for African American students with the same features that white schools usually had, like running water and electricity. School districts closed old one- or two-teacher schools and built larger schools with more teachers and classrooms. South Carolina created its first sales tax to fund the program.

The commission first funded new schools in Clarendon County School District #22, where the Briggs v. Elliott case began. Governor Byrnes used this program to prove that South Carolina was committed to providing "separate but equal" schools. The equalization program was used in arguments for the Briggs v. Elliott lawsuit to defend the school district and the state against the parents. Clarendon County asked the court for more time to build new black schools.

Not all school districts wanted to participate in the program. Many districts wanted to take the funds from the state and only improve their white schools. Charleston County school officials did not want to build a new black high school to replace one that had closed. Some local districts refused to apply for state funds at all if it meant equalizing their schools. When districts combined smaller schools into one large school, many African Americans lost the center of their community. A few black leaders also opposed the new schools, because they wanted desegregation instead of equalization.

The EFC granted most of its equalization money by 1955. South Carolina built over 700 new schools and spent over $214 million. A newspaper article described the equalization schools as "clean-cut functional buildings, making little or no distinction in design between white and colored schools." Even though African American students had new schools, they still lacked books for their libraries and new desks in their classrooms. When the Supreme Court ruled against segregation, South Carolina did not comply.

South Carolina maintained its fully segregated system until 1963. Eleven African American students attended Charleston's white schools under a court order that year, but most school districts were still segregated. The federal government stopped this system by 1970. It refused to give money to segregated school districts. Many of the equalization schools closed at that time. African American high schools often became elementary schools in the new system. Most of the equalization schools have been expanded or replaced with new schools. Some schools are used for a different purpose.

**Reading Questions** *(answer on a separate sheet of paper; make sure to title it “SC school equalization”)*

**1)** What were "equalization schools?" How were they named?

**2)** Who supported the equalization school program? What were their goals?

**3)** What do you think African American parents thought of the equalization schools program? Why? (Refer to Document 1 if necessary)

**4)** Why do you think it took 16 years after Brown v. Board of Education for most South Carolina school districts to close their segregated schools?