# Chapter One
# Arlington County, Virginia:
# Setting the Stage for Alternative Education

Change was the tradition in America in the late 1960's and early 1970's. It was a period of disruption, of political protest, and of participatory democracy. Marked by the assassinations of great American leaders, the era is remembered for the liberation movements of students, women, and most notably civil rights. The country was fighting a war on two fronts. As it sent America's youth to fight the Communists in Vietnam, the entire nation fought racial prejudice at home. Citizens questioned authority at every level. Arlington County, Virginia echoed the nation's call for change.

## A PROGRESSIVE COUNTY

For decades this community lived in the midst of national reform. Located across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C., Arlington has had a symbiotic relationship with the nation's Capitol since the days of the New Deal. Many people moved to Arlington in response to the job opportunities opening up in the New Deal governmental agencies. The newcomers came from all over the country. They were "appalled by the 'sleepy southern town' mentality that had been running things until then,"[3] and they quickly gave a new character to the county.

The growth of the United States government through World War II continued to bring thousands of newcomers to Arlington. By the late 1940's the county became primarily the residence of government employees. These people took an active interest in shaping the community in accordance with their experiences. They had a high level of education, and this together with "their relative affluence raised their standards for the sort of schooling they

[3]Jeff Kallen, interview by Christy Mach, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 19 February 1996, page 1.

wanted their children to have."[4] In 1947, the inadequacy of Arlington's schools shocked O. Glenn Stahl when one of his children went to a high school where there wasn't even a science lab. He had attended "a high school out in Indiana a generation earlier, and it had a science lab and all the trimmings,"[5] but Arlington, on the doorstep of the Nation's capitol, was not so well equipped.

Many parents in Arlington believed the system of appointing of school board members to be part of the problem. The Commonwealth of Virginia appointed a circuit court judge who appointed a School Board Trustee Electoral Board, who in turn appointed members to the Arlington County School Board. This complex structure effectively removed the school board from any responsiveness to the people of Arlington. The county's new population challenged this system.

In 1946, the Citizens Committee for School Improvement (CCSI) began to bring about changes in Arlington's public schools. These citizens were progressive, and "quite out of favor with the traditional minded people down in Richmond."[6] At the time, the federal Hatch Act prohibited government employees from affiliating with the local political parties. The purpose of the act was to protect United States employees from undue political influence, but it had the opposite effect in Arlington. These citizens had no electoral voice and therefore no control over their own local government. As a result, they created their own political party called Arlingtonians for a Better Community, or ABC, which still exists today. It was neither Democratic nor Republican, and enough people supported it that it became a major party in the community.

Establishing this political party started as a way to upgrade the public

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[4]C.B. Rose, Jr. *Arlington County Virginia: A History.* Arlington: Arlington Historical Society, Inc. 1976. page 198.
[5]Dusty Horwitt. "The Past as Prologue." *The Washington Post,* October 31, 1993, page C1.
[6]Ray Anderson, interview by Christy Mach, Arlington, Virginia, 26 January 1996, page 3.

school system. The CCSI wanted to make the school board responsible to the citizens of Arlington. To that end, the ABC lobbied the Virginia State Legislature for the right to elect their school board members by popular vote. After two years of litigation, the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals upheld their case, and "from 1947 until 1956, Arlington was the only Virginia locality ever to elect its School Board."[7]

During that time Arlington's school system rose to national acclaim. In the early fifties *Life Magazine* identified Washington-Lee High School, one of Arlington's three traditional high schools (along with Wakefield and Yorktown) as one of the ten best public high schools in the United States.[8] The trouble came in 1956, "after a year and a half of community hearings and negotiation," when the Arlington County School Board voted to uphold the 1954 Supreme Court decision Brown v. Board of Education and adopt a three-year plan to desegregate its schools.[9] Arlington's decision to integrate violated the Virginia State Legislature's policy of "massive resistance" to integration. "The School Board assumed that Virginia's conservative Democratic State Government, though no champion of integration, would allow localities to integrate if they chose to do so. But downstate legislators had no intention of letting any Virginians comply with Brown."[10] The State Legislature refused to let the county integrate. It abolished Arlington's elected school board and installed an appointed body in its place. The county did not return to an elected school board until 1993.

From 1956, the largely Republican county board appointed members to the school board, and a renewed conservatism regulated Arlington's schools.

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[7]Dusty Horwitt. "The Past as Prologue." *The Washington Post*, October 31, 1993, page C1.
[8]Anderson interview, page 4.
[9]Ibid.
[10]Dusty Horwitt. "When Arlington Was Little Rock: Remembering a Forgotten School Integration Struggle." *The Washington Post*, February 4, 1996, page C1.

The issue of integration divided citizens and the system was fraught with trouble. "The population was divided, the county board was divided, the school board was divided, and perhaps the students to some degree were divided too."[11]

Following the state's action, a small group of determined black and white Arlington parents took up the fight to integrate their schools. "On May 17, 1956, exactly two years after Brown, the NAACP filed suit in federal court on behalf of the 14 parents and 22 children to force desegregation in Arlington's schools."[12] Though a minority, the progressive citizens of this community reflected the national movement for Civil Rights at the grassroots level. In 1958 a US District Judge upheld the Brown decision, and three years after Arlington had tried to do it on its own, the county did integrate its schools. On February 2, 1959, Arlington's Stratford Junior High School, became the first school in the state to integrate. The next day, "Arlington's peaceful integration made headlines around the world," illustrating once again the gains made by the progressive cadre of its citizens.[13]

## A DECADE OF MOVEMENTS

A wave of optimism swept the country as it moved into the next decade. In 1960, John F. Kennedy was elected President and the national atmosphere became one of change: "It was time, he proclaimed, to get the country moving again."[14] The Civil Rights Movement stormed onto the national stage and questioned America at its moral core. College students committed to civil rights

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[11]Jim Stockard, discussion panel, February 15, 1996.
[12]Dusty Horwitt. "When Arlington Was Little Rock: Remembering a Forgotten School Integration Struggle." *The Washington Post*, February 4, 1996, page C1.
[13]Ibid.
[14]Allen J. Matusow. *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s.* New York: Harper & Row Publishers. 1984. page 18.

and the restructuring of the social order gained national attention in 1962. Students for a Democratic Society (S.D.S.) built upon grassroots organization and pushed for participatory democracy: a society in which people would take control over their own lives. The next step in this rapid radicalization was Vietnam. Many of America's youth burned their draft cards, and the anti-war movement too moved into the national limelight.

The climate was soul-searching and critical. Collectively, America was beginning to face the aftermath of the institutionalization of racism. A "hot" war with Communism was testing the whole "red menace" idea. "Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* had a major popular impact on the dream of the middle class stay-at-home housewife, and of course you had the 'Youth Culture' too with its music, drugs, and art. All of this sold newspapers, magazines, television, records, you name it."[15]

By the middle of the decade these national movements trickled down to the high school level in Arlington. Desegregation caused never-before-encountered racial problems in America's schools. An after-school stabbing that involved two Wakefield High School students (one black and the other white) marked the beginning of "racial concerns at the school."[16] Emboldened by the movements of the day, other students throughout the county questioned existing authority. At Washington-Lee High School students on the crew team complained that their coach made them cut their hair. "The Dean of Women at Washington-Lee sent girls home from school if she did not like the way they were dressed," and students complained and rebelled against that too.[17] One female student wore pants under her skirt in

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[15]Kallen interview, 21 February 1996, page 2.
[16]Mary McBride, interview by Christy Mach, Arlington, Virginia, 7 March 1996, page 2.
[17]Ann Broder, interview by Christy Mach, Arlington, Virginia, 9 March 1996.

silent protest to the dress code. Others felt that true learning was lost to a book of rules, and that teachers had taken on the role of disciplinarian not educator.

Just a decade before, "Washington-Lee had been *the* high school in Virginia."[18] Yet, to many, Arlington's schools in the sixties appeared to be falling apart at the seams. Conservatives chafed the young student radicals. At Williamsburg Middle School an assistant principal put bubble gum in the hair of a male student because he thought the student's hair was too long.[19] During a community meeting at Washington-Lee, a parent slapped a student when he called her husband a fascist. The situation was getting out of hand.

Politics was very much in the air, and Arlington's proximity to the capitol naturally affected its citizens. On October 27, 1967, fifty thousand American citizens made their contribution to the Anti-War movement by marching into Arlington, Virginia to close down the Pentagon. A national movement had literally come to Arlington County. Rather than echoing national trends, its citizens were host to one.

The national climate influenced local politics in Arlington. Liberals began to win seats in the county government, and by the mid-late sixties progressives had replaced conservatives on both the county and school boards. These new board members would respond to the progressive changes of the county. It was this mixture of local and national issues that allowed for an educational reform movement to take root in Arlington County.

In 1967 the County Board established the Arlington Youth Council with representatives from all the high schools and junior highs in the community. It was an attempt on the part of the administration to solve the unrest that plagued the county's once exemplary school system. It was "a great opportunity for young people throughout the community to get to know each

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[18]Ibid.
[19]Ibid.

other, to find out what common concerns were, and to learn more about participatory democracy."[20] Liberals embraced the council as an effort to build a new generation of citizens. Operating under the supervision of a Youth Coordinator and fifteen adult members from the community, grown-ups showed young people how to operate the ropes and let them do what they could with the knowledge. Though giving students a voice was risky, letting them go unrestrained could have been disastrous. What if the students staged a sit-in or march on the school! To conservatives the council appeared the lesser of two evils. Many believed that by giving students an official voice it would be possible "to channel what they were doing."[21] The establishment of the Youth Council was in keeping with Arlington's progressive political history, but it also allowed the county administration to keep the lid on an increasingly volatile situation.

The Youth Council did offer a temporary solution to the escalating tension in Arlington's schools. 1968 changed that. In that year Americans across the spectrum believed themselves to be on the verge of revolution. Nationally there was a sense that things were changing at almost lightning speed, and the traditional order seemed to be fading fast. Many undercurrents of discontent rose to the surface. The New Right, Black Power, and Student radicals staged dramatic demonstrations. In 1968, King's assassination triggered a new wave of bloody rioting, and the Tet Offensive in Vietnam seemed to signal the military American defeat. These events radicalized the nation, and they had a similar effect in Arlington. They provided links between sympathetic citizens that would be essential in Arlington's push for alternative education.

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[20]Kallen interview, 21 February 1996, page 4.
[21]Broder interview, 10 March 1996, page 1.

Diana Huf, a student at Washington-Lee, petitioned the school board to allow students one day of school to go out into the community and talk with people about the war. "She felt this was educational and democratic."[22] Jeff Kallen, also a student at Washington-Lee, "used to print anti-war documents for his tenth grade math teacher Jerry O'Shaghnessy, who would also authorize students to print certain anti-war documents at the County Administration Building. No one balked at this because after all there was a war on."[23]

On June 26, 1969, the Arlington Youth Council submitted a lengthy proposal to the School Board regarding student "guidelines." This shocked the conservatives and galvanized the liberals. The proposal recommended "that students be governed by rules and regulations and not arbitrary decisions" which the county's existing "general guidelines" allowed for.[24] Hundreds of students from all three high schools signed a petition supporting the proposal. To counter the initiative, members of the Concerned Parents Association "wholeheartedly concurred" with the School Board's "general guidelines" and advocated that they not be amended.[25]

Debate continued. Students wanted to know why the principal of Yorktown suspended William Brock because of his long hair. Another student, Dave Henderson questioned why his teachers at Washington-Lee harassed him because he wore his hair long. Students petitioned that it "was unjust and unbecoming for a school such as Washington-Lee, with such a high reputation, to adopt a policy that deprived students of their right to an education simply because of their appearance."[26] Conservative parents

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[22]Minutes Book No.10, Arlington County, Virginia. November 6, 1969, page 199.
[23]Kallen interview, 19 February 1996, page 2.
[24]Minutes Book No. 10, Arlington County, Virginia. June 17, 1969, page 167.
[25]Ibid.
[26]Minutes Book No. 10, Arlington County, Virginia. September 18, 1969, page 186.

continued to disagree. Mrs. Emily Griffiths argued that "school is a place to learn, and when dressed like ladies and gentlemen young people act like ladies and gentlemen,"[27] suggesting that fashionable attire was detrimental to the learning process.

In response to long debates at supplemental school board meetings, the members of the board endorsed a survey of the secondary school population to test the validity of student claims. In the fall of 1969 Steve Kurcis, an intern in Arlington's Administrative Program, conducted the survey of student attitudes towards school. He traveled to Wakefield, Washington-Lee, and Yorktown High Schools, interviewing the bright students as well as the average and below-average students, and he included those that came from wealthy, poor, and middle-class families to ensure "data that was not slanted one way or the other."[28]

The final report submitted to the School Board and the Superintendent revealed "results that were very negative in regard to attitudes toward the school from at least 80% of the students."[29] Some commented that "school was like a jail, and that it was boring: you did the same thing every day at 8:00 a.m. in the morning, and you did the same thing every day at 2:00 p.m. in the afternoon."[30] Others were dissatisfied with being herded from class to class like cattle, and felt that they had no free time to talk to their friends or anyone else. The report officially documented student unrest in the high schools. The student body was changing with the times and the school system had to respond to that change.

Partially in response to the Kurcis report, Arlington began to implement educational reforms. In the Spring of 1969 Experiments in Free-

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[27]Ibid.
[28]Steve Kurcis, interview by Christy Mach, Arlington, Virginia 9 March 1996.
[29]Ibid.
[30]Ibid.

Form Education (EFFE) took place in all three of Arlington's public high schools. As history teachers at Wakefield, Ray Anderson and Mary McBride were among those involved. Regular classes were canceled for one week in order to try things that were not in the curriculum. Instead of teaching history that week Ray Anderson taught his students two mini-courses: one was on how to play duplicate bridge and the other on how intelligence agencies operate. The following year the school conducted an experiment they called 3-2-2 . The idea behind this experiment was to suspend regular one hour period classes for two weeks in the Spring, and teach mini-courses in two and three hour blocks instead. Students received a mini-catalogue of classes from which to choose and then attended those courses for the allotted two-week period.

Similar activities took place at the other high schools. Brenda Glenn, a teacher at Washington-Lee, taught several sections of folklore and folk music to students in her English class. "The EFFE sought to use other spaces throughout the community and extend learning outside of the classroom. One day students went to the YMCA and listened to rock bands," and another day they traveled to the National Zoo.[31] At Yorktown speakers came in to a sociology class to talk about women's rights. The school also organized "open universities" in the afternoons at various times throughout the year. Regular classes were canceled, and students were allowed "to choose the activity they participated in. It might be tap dancing" or a field trip to the county courthouse.[32] These experiments in Arlington reflected the larger movement seen in education circles at the time.

Alternative learning was a trend in the late sixties and early seventies. The "Parkway" experiment in Philadelphia gave students the opportunity to

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[31]Brenda Glenn, interview by Christy Mach, Arlington, Virginia, 8 March 1996.

[32]Martha Bozman, interview by Christy Mach, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 11 March 1996.

study independently and to design their own curricula. Students went to "non-graded classes in two dozen different public buildings and private institutions located along or near the mile-and-a-half length of the city's tree-lined Benjamin Franklin Parkway."[33] Educational experiments were taking place at the John Dewey High School in Brooklyn, New York, at the University of Massachusetts School of Education, and at other places around the country.

Mainstream magazines such as the *Saturday Review, Newsweek, Life,* and *Time* carried features on new ideas in education and criticisms of traditional methods. "The alternative press was coming out with new critiques of the relationship between the oppression of the educational system and the oppression of the Amerikan society (the spelling in keeping with the spirit of the times). Students, who are always unhappy about something, were given a way to focus their unhappiness into concrete proposals for change in the system."[34] Books on the subject by authors such as Neil Postman, Jonathan Kozol, and Lloyd Trump were coming out all the time .

In Arlington, *Summerhill,* a famous book about a radical English school, "had been rediscovered and redistributed."[35] New schools were under construction at both the elementary and junior high school level. The building plans were spacious with big open classrooms, and they reflected the trend toward open learning that was going on at that time.

In the Spring of 1970 the School Board received requests for a student bill of rights. The Board heard students from numerous groups throughout the county. One student, Jeff Kallen, of Washington-Lee High School's Teen-Age Democrats, pointed out that the staff stratification (at the top) suggested "ossification" in the school system, and he requested a change. Another

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[33]Donald Cox. "Learning on the Road;" *The Saturday Review,* May 17, 1969.
[34]Kallen interview, 22 February 1996, page 2.
[35]Judy Mayeux, interview by Christy Mach, Arlington, Virginia, 26 January 1996.

student, Jim Massey of Yorktown High School's Young Democrats, suggested that students be encouraged to develop an interest in education instead of being forced to attend classes. He also asked for clarification of the rules and regulations at Yorktown. Linda Sigmond, also from Yorktown High School's Young Democrats, asked that a specific "bill of rights for high school students" be adopted, and Erik Floyd, of the Wakefield Student Assembly, noted the "outmoded curriculum" and emphasized the need for "democracy and freedom of expression" in the high schools. Wayne Parks, of the Arlington Student Coalition, presented a series of budget proposals that would make the educational system "more relevant," and he urged that the School Board "undertake a major reform of the existing school system."[36] Students actively challenged the establishment, and they wrote proposals to change it.

The Arlington Student Coalition, established by a group of active high school students from all over the county, attributed the disenchantment of high school students with their educational experience to the "schools' policies of mandatory attendance and numerical grading."[37] They believed that such methods of external motivation encouraged social and educational immaturity in students who were psychologically mature in age. These high school students believed that they were old enough and mature enough to make responsible educational decisions independently of adult supervision. The coalition also claimed that the schools offered dull classes, which was why students skipped class or attended but then slept, talked, or daydreamed through the hour. They had their own ideas about how to solve such problems. The group suggested that the situation be improved through extensive use of the community and metropolitan area resources. These activities would

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[36]Minute Book No. 10, County School Board, Arlington, Virginia, March 5, 1970, page 232.

[37]Arlington Student Coalition. Memorandum in Support of Proposals to Arlington County School Board Concerning 1970-71 Budget. Arlington, Virginia, 5 March 1970, page 1.

enhance student interest and relieve boredom in the classroom. The group advocated the adoption of a bill of rights for high school students, claiming it "would encourage young people to become responsible and independent members of the community."[38]

The idea for the student bill of rights "grew out of the Constitution."[39] Its proponents sought to give students an equal voice within the school system. However, due to the whole culture of student awareness and the perception of students as an 'oppressed group,' the bill became an issue that citizens rallied both behind and against. Students wanted political, personal, and disciplinary rights that were denied them by school administrators. Politically they wanted the freedom to form organizations and freedom from censorship of school publications and P.A. announcements. Personally they wanted the freedom to wear armbands and buttons and to grow their hair long. "Disciplinary rights included the right to due process regarding the imposition of significant punishments, including an adequate appeals procedure."[40] Though the number of students who pushed for reforms in the high schools was small, "they were a noticeable group" and people listened to them.

A number of Arlington's parents supported student efforts. Ann Broder was one such person. Her eldest son participated in political organizations at Washington-Lee High School, where students were attempting to gain personal freedoms. Recognizing that the school rules were "overly rigid," and "appalled" by the conduct of certain conservative school administrators, Mrs. Broder became deeply involved in trying to change things.[41] During the progressive Hutchins' era, she had attended the University of Chicago at the

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[38]Ibid., page 3.
[39]Kallen interview, 19 February 1996, page 2.
[40]Arlington Student Coalition; Memorandum in Support of Proposals to Arlington County School Board Concerning 1970-71 Budget. Arlington, Virginia, 5 March 1970, page 4.
[41]Broder interview.

age of sixteen with a group of other sixteen-year-olds. Therefore she "naturally felt that the sensible, bright, curious, and energetic students [in Arlington] were a good judge of what they needed to learn, and how and what they would learn."[42] She was on the committee of student rights and responsibilities (later, in 1973 she began an eight year term on the school board).

When the board members set up a committee to investigate the student proposal for a student bill of rights proposal, a conservative group called Concerned Citizens opposed it. The right-wingers did their best to paralyze the investigating process. "Week after week they called points of order, going over the minutes of the previous meeting with a fine tooth comb, insisting that nothing could be done until the minutes had been agreed, and making sure that nothing was discussed except the minutes."[43] Conservatives made a mockery of the Youth Council, and at the local level, political polarization precluded the adoption of a student bill of rights.

Societal divisions were also visible in Arlington's schools, as one situation at Wakefield reflects: "One student was the son of General Daniel Graham, who was the head of the Defense Intelligence Agency. The student was really conservative, and he came into class saying 'my dad tells me it's Communists who are organizing these marches against the war.' Another student, the son of the current Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Ward, went out and stood on a bridge trying to block the traffic into D.C. He wanted to shut down the government and stop the Vietnam War. This was the kind of discrepancy you would find in the classroom."[44] There was much diversity in what students and parents wanted, and this weighed heavy on the minds of both the school and county administrators.

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[42]Broder interview.
[43] Kallen interview, 22 February 1996, page 2.
[44]Anderson interview, 26 January 1996, page 8.

One incident in 1970 illustrates the climate. Jim Massey, a Yorktown High School student and President of the Youth Council, passed out a leaflet urging kids to assemble outside the County Education building on the day of an anti-war rally. The local right-wing got wind of this and exerted pressure on the Commonwealth's Attorney's office which was very much the province of the old Southern community, and Jim was prosecuted for urging children to absent themselves unlawfully from school. Jim's lawyer called in loads of students from the youth movement (15 people, that is) as witnesses to the fact that there was a movement going on and Jim was only a cog in the wheel. The prosecution could only produce one fellow who didn't go to school that day and couldn't say that the leaflet had influenced him at all, and the case was dismissed. But there you have it: young people acting locally and tied in to national issues, opposed by an influential part of the local adult community.[45] Only fifteen students came to Massey's aid, reflecting that the activism did not extend to a large part of the school-going population. It was the fact that the activists were outspoken, optimistic, and part of something bigger, or rather, several bigger things, that made them have the impact they did.

The school board was under fire. In addition to student and parent unrest over the high school situation, the desegregation of the all-black Drew Elementary School in the almost exclusively black Nauck community caused heated debate. In 1970, it was appalling for the school to be segregated. Initial plans to close Drew and bus all of the black students to integrated schools throughout the county were opposed. Nauck community residents wanted their children to go to school close to home, and they did not want to see their neighborhood school closed. Wayne Parks and other members of the Wakefield Student Council joined the Drew community in their opposition. Students recognized two injustices on the part of county administrators. First,

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[45]Kallen interview, 22 February 1996, pages 3-4.

Arlington County, home of Stratford Junior High School -- the first school in the state of Virginia to integrate -- had let Drew Elementary fall by the wayside. Ten years later Stratford had integrated in 1959, Drew was still segregated. Second, the county's solution to the problem of desegregating Drew was to close down the black neighborhood school and bus the students out of their community. The black students would not even be bussed to the same school. The school board arbitrarily divided the Nauck community in such a way that some neighbors would be bussed to two different schools. Clearly, the board's plan was not fair. Parks bridged the gap between student dissatisfaction at the high schools and the issue of desegregating Drew Elementary School. He urged that "representative parent and student groups from all aspects of the community work together towards a solution" that would desegregate Drew in a fair and just manner.[46]

In response, the school board studied various alternatives available for desegregating the school. One proposed solution was the establishment of a Model Elementary School in the Drew building. If alternative learning was the trend in education, why not use it in Arlington as a creative way to solve the problem of desegregating Drew? Instead of bussing all of the black children out, the proposal advocated a magnet school that would guarantee a percentage of neighborhood students enrollment and draw white students in. The community petitioned their desegregation plan, and it was taken to both local and state courts.

On the high school front, the Youth Council continued to push educational reform ideas wherever they could, and the Concerned Parents Association continued to check them at every step along the way. The experiments at Free-Form Education were not working. They never lasted longer than a two week period, and it was difficult to break the existing

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[46]Minute Book No.10, Arlington County, Virginia, January 22, 1970, page 219.

structure to implement new policies. Some students needed more structure than the schools were providing and yet others fought the existing structure tooth and nail. Neither the students nor their teachers were content with the situation. The Arlington Educational Association (AEA), the closest thing Arlington has to a Teachers' Union, submitted several different suggestions to the school board in hopes of finding a solution to the problem of educating all students equally well. None seemed viable, and school principals were worried. O.U. Johanson, the principal of Washington-Lee, used to call Jeff Kallen into his office from time to time "just to chat and find out what the 'activists' (his word) were thinking."[47]

Jeff Kallen was the recognized spokesman for many students. Kallen grew up in a household with parents who worked as a US Civil Servant and teacher of political science at a local community college. Both parents were active in Arlington politics, and the 1960 presidential election "was probably not the first time [Jeff] helped [his] parents pass out leaflets."[48] His first protest was in the 6th grade at Taylor Elementary School. Dissatisfied with school lunches, Kallen organized a petition to change them. A nutritionist from the county participated in a discussion of the issue, and the lunches were eventually improved. The system worked! One of his teachers encouraged Jeff and his classmates to write letters to the local newspapers in protest to the treatment of the marchers in Selma, Alabama. The school also held a debate on the Vietnam War -- young children were encouraged to argue national issues.

Steeped in politics, Jeff Kallen continued to be active at Stratford Junior High School, where he became a member of the Arlington Youth Council. In 1970 he was elected president of the group and sat in on "an average of 4.2 committee meetings a week."[49] Through the council he had regular access to

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[47]Kallen interview, 21 February 1996, page 3.
[48]Kallen interview, 19 February 1996, page 1.
[49]Kallen interview, 22 February 1996, page 3.

the school board, and from there Jeff got into the habit of visiting people in the Administration Building. He "could see the Superintendent of Schools almost at the drop of a hat."[50] Kallen would also meet with Associate Superintendent Harold Wilson and talk about the possibility of setting up various types of schools in the county. They discussed the idea of combining "a classical high school, an experimental school, and a foreign language school all on one site, so as to provide a social mix as well as an atmosphere of choice and freedom."[51] Jeff Kallen was a sixteen-year-old high school student. That these discussions took place, and that important adults listened to him, suggest the extraordinary situation in Arlington at the time.

Superintendent Robert Wilson "recognized that things were changing."[52] Having a son at Yorktown High School perhaps made him more sensitive to the needs and wants of students than otherwise would be expected from an administrator in his position. His colleague, Harold Wilson, had an impeccable reputation as an educator throughout the community. In the late fifties "people used to say that there were three systems of education in Arlington. Harold Wilson's at Wakefield High School was one of them."[53] More than the Superintendent, Wilson realized that times had changed and that changes were needed to meet the needs of a new kind of student. The support of these two administrators proved essential in the push for the new school which began in the Spring of 1971.

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[50]Ibid.

[51]Ibid.

[52]Steve Kurcis interview.

[53]Broder interview. Patty Hale's system at Taylor Elementary and the Arlington County public school system were the other two systems of education in the county.