At Levine Museum of the New South, we look at how Charlotte and the surrounding area has changed since the end of the American Civil War in 1865. These changes range from the types of jobs people have held to the constitutional rights we hold dear today. When we think about the New South, we like to define it as:

• A Time — The New South is the period of time from 1865, following the Civil War, to the present.
• A Place — The New South includes areas of the Southeast U.S. that began to grow and flourish after 1865.
• An Idea — The New South represents new ways of thinking about economic, political and cultural life in the South.

This lesson plan explores Charlotte’s path to school desegregation and resegregation.

Objective: Students will learn about the landmark Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education ruling of 1971 that led to widespread integration in Charlotte’s schools.

Essential Question: What viewpoints were/are there for and against busing to desegregate schools?

Standards Addressed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.G.1</td>
<td>Understand how human, environmental and technological factors affect the growth and development of North Carolina.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.E.1</td>
<td>Understand how a market economy impacts life in North Carolina.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.H.2</td>
<td>Understand the political, economic and/or social significance of historical events, issues, individuals and cultural groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.H.1</td>
<td>Use historical thinking to analyze various modern societies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.H.1</td>
<td>Apply historical thinking to understand the creation and development of North Carolina and the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.H.3</td>
<td>Understand the factors that contribute to change and continuity in North Carolina and the United States.</td>
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<tr>
<td>AH1.H.1.2</td>
<td>Use historical comprehension to reconstruct meaning of a passage, differentiate between facts and interpretation, analyze data in maps and analyze visual literary and musical sources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AH1.H.1.4</td>
<td>Use historical research to formulate historical questions obtain data from a variety of sources, support interpretations with evidence and construct analytical essays using evidence to support arguments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AH1.H.4/AH2.H.4</td>
<td>Analyze how conflict and compromise have shaped politics, economics and culture in the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AH1.H.5/AH2.H.5</td>
<td>Understand how tensions between freedom, equality and power have shaped the political, economic and social development of the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AH1.H.7/AH2.H.7</td>
<td>Understand the impact of war on American politics, economics, society and culture.</td>
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We Shall Overcome:
The Swann Decision Part 2
1940s-1970s

Activity 2A: Working with Primary Sources:

After examining each primary source, complete the questions after each one, being sure to explain your answers.

Johnson C. Smith University
Charlotte, North Carolina
September 2, 1964

The Charlotte Mecklenberg Board of Education
720 East Fourth Street
Charlotte, North Carolina

Gentlemen:

On behalf of my wife and myself I am writing to request the assignment of our son, James Everett Swann, aged six, to the Seversville School, 1701 Sumter Avenue, Charlotte, N.C. I am a member of the faculty of Johnson C. Smith University and we reside on the campus.

Our reasons for seeking admission for our son in the Seversville School are as follows:

1. The Seversville School is the nearest school to us; the Siddieville School is more than twice as far away from our house. It would be considerably more difficult, in relationship to my responsibilities in the University, to get James to and from school at Siddieville than it would be at Seversville.

2. We believe that an integrated school will best prepare young people for responsibility in an integrated society. Having lived practically all of his life in India, James has never known the meaning of racial segregation. We have been happy to watch him grow and develop with an unaffected openness to people of all races and backgrounds, and we feel it our duty as parents to insure that this healthy development continue. James attended Seversville briefly on August 31st and he liked the school and its atmosphere. We did also and feel that this is where we would like him to be.

3. In spite of the present method of districting (which appears to have been worked out to permit token integration only) used in the Charlotte-Mecklenberg schools, we are emboldened to make this request by the knowledge that in numerous instances students, for various reasons, have been given the option of choosing schools other than those which by residence they are entitled to attend. We hold that the law should be equally binding upon all and that it should guarantee equal freedom to all. Otherwise the law is discriminatory.
We trust that the Board of Education may see fit to grant our request. We are sure that you are as anxious as we are that James should begin his schooling without further delay. May we, therefore, respectfully request a speedy decision in the matter. We shall wait upon your decision before taking further steps.

Respectfully yours,

Carius L. Swann

Source #1: Swann Letter, 1964

1. Who is this letter from?

2. To whom is it addressed?

3. Why did the author write this letter?

4. What do you think the writer meant by “further steps” in the closing of the letter?
We Shall Overcome: The Swann Decision Part 2
1940s-1970s

A MAZE OF BUS ROUTES TO INTEGRATE CHARLOTTE SCHOOLS

This map shows the complex busing patterns required under a federal-court order to get more racial integration in public schools of the Charlotte area. Ten schools in the heavily black inner city—marked with black circles—will exchange pupils with 24 mostly white schools—white circles—in the fringes of the city or in suburbs of surrounding Mecklenburg County. The bus routes, between schools bearing the same number on the map, will average 15 miles in length and, it is estimated, will require an average travel time of about 1 hour 10 minutes each way.

for junior and senior high schools go into effect on May 4.

Parents who approve. There are numerous parents in Charlotte who are willing to accept this busing in the belief that its advantages outweigh its disadvantages.

"I've never seen any trauma arising from a child riding a bus, or any kind of evil from a child riding a bus," says Mrs. Julia Maulden, a member of the school board who favors the busing. "But I have seen evil from segregation."

Leaders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, who took part in the suit that brought the busing order, argue that the effect will be to improve the quality of education for Negroes.

Walter McDaniel, a member of the Interested Citizens Association, predominantly Negro, says this:

"It's time that this city decided to commit itself to total integration of all its citizens. If it takes busing to bring about racial integration, it's time to bus."

One effect of the controversy has been to speed the growth of private schools in this area. At present, there are about (continued on next page)
We Shall Overcome:  
The Swann Decision Part 2  
1940s-1970s

Source #2: Map of CMS Bus Routes, 1970

1. How long was the average one-way bus route from home to school?

2. What was Mrs. Julia Maulden’s opinion on busing?

3. Can you think of some advantages and disadvantages of going to a school outside of your home area?

4. Can you think of some advantages and disadvantages of going to a school inside of your home area?
We Shall Overcome: The Swann Decision Part 2
1940s-1970s

Student protest in Charlotte, NC.

Source #3: Photograph

1. What appears to be happening in this photo?

2. What is the atmosphere of the photo?

3. What can you tell from the students’ expressions?

4. Can you tell if these students are for or against busing? Why?
We Shall Overcome:  
The Swann Decision Part 2  
1940s-1970s

Student protest in Charlotte, NC, 1970; courtesy of bpr.org.

Source #4: Photograph

1. What appears to be happening in this photo?

2. What is the atmosphere of the photo?

3. How are the expressions of the black and white students different?

4. Do you think the black and white students pictured have the same opinion on busing? Why or why not?
We Shall Overcome: 
The Swann Decision Part 2 
1940s-1970s


Source #5: Photograph

1. What appears to be happening in this photo?

2. What is the atmosphere of the photo?

3. What can you tell from looking at people’s expressions?

4. Can you tell if these people are for or against busing? Why?
On October 8, 1984, Ronald Reagan made a campaign stop in Charlotte, just weeks shy of his landslide re-election victory.

During his stump speech, President Reagan brought up busing for school desegregation, labeling the program a failure that “takes innocent children out of the neighborhood school and makes them pawns in a social experiment that nobody wants.”

The previously raucous crowd of Charlotteans fell silent.

What Reagan clearly didn’t understand was that the Charlotte community took enormous pride in its integrated schools. The next day the Charlotte Observer published an editorial entitled, “You were Wrong, Mr. President” and rebuked the president in a powerful statement in support of school desegregation: “Charlotte-Mecklenburg’s proudest achievement of the past 20 years is not the city’s impressive skyline or its strong, growing economy. Its proudest achievement is its fully integrated schools.”

Fast forward 34 years. The CMS school board’s recent actions in response to efforts by four predominantly white suburban communities to create and fund new charter schools for its own residents have been met with criticism, not support, by the Charlotte Observer editorial writers.

At issue is a resolution to block new school construction in Matthews, Mint Hill, Cornelius and Huntersville unless the communities agree to a moratorium on creating municipal charter schools. It’s not unreasonable for CMS to carefully consider new investments of scarce construction dollars in areas that may no longer want to be part of the district.

Could the school board have handled things better? Given the heated rhetoric on both sides, more caution was probably warranted. But should their response really be the story here?

Thanks to House Bill 514 introduced by Rep. Bill Brawley, these four communities can create their own separate charter schools with preferential admittance of town residents. Their populations are on average 80 percent white, 10 percent black and 6 percent Hispanic. The current CMS student population is 29 percent white, 40 percent black and 22 percent Hispanic. These new charter schools would be hyper-segregated and mostly white, and would exacerbate Charlotte’s already staggering rate of resegregation.

For many years, Charlotte was known across the country as “the city that made desegregation work.” Charlotte, after all, was the site of the 1971 Supreme Court decision in Swann v. Charlotte Mecklenburg Board of Education, which led to the implementation of a district-wide busing plan to finally put into practice what Brown v. Board of Education had ordered over 15 years earlier. Despite significant backlash, black and white community leaders, parents, and administrators worked together to create a plan to ensure that the racial makeup of district schools was reflective of those of the community overall; and for the most part, it worked.
We Shall Overcome: 
The Swann Decision Part 2 
1940s-1970s

Research by UNCC professor Roslyn Mickelson and others has shown that between 1971 and 2002, the majority of CMS students attended racially desegregated schools and achievement for all students improved as a result. Of course, desegregation did not rid Charlotte of its deep, historical racial inequalities, but it was a step in the right direction.

Now Charlotte is making headlines again, but this time, not for accolades. Today, more than 20 percent of CMS schools are 90-100 percent minority. In 1989, it was 0.1 percent. And now, the General Assembly has allowed for the creation of a new type of exclusive charter school for those in the suburbs. ‘White flight’ is being replaced by ‘white fences’.

The city that made desegregation work is now the most segregated school district in North Carolina. The creation of municipal charter schools will only make matters worse. We urge Charlotte’s powerful corporate, philanthropic and media voices that championed desegregation efforts in the past to focus on the likely long-term devastating impact of these new municipal charter schools and less on personalities and school board actions. Isn’t it time to find some inspiration from the city’s noble history and save the outrage for the effort to take Charlotte backwards?

Source #6: Charlotte Observer Article, 2018

1. What did the editorial after President Reagan’s 1984 visit state was Charlotte’s proudest achievement?

2. How do you know from the article that busing based on student race had ended in Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools by 2002?

3. What is the most segregated school district in North Carolina today?

5. Can you think of ways Charlotte could create more integrated schools today?
Activity 2B: Create a Protest Button:

In addition to carrying protest signs, many people during the Civil Rights Era wore protest buttons with short and clever slogans to express how they felt about issues. Think about a current issue important to you and the message you would want to display about it. Create your own protest button in the space below or on your own paper. Try to use five words or less on your button.