

Executive Summary



***Brown v. Board of Education* Scholarship Awards Committee 2008 Session of the Virginia General Assembly**

The *Brown v. Board of Education* Scholarship Program and Fund was created by the 2004 General Assembly, within the legislative branch of government, in response to Virginia's two-year long commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the landmark Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954). The Program is designed to assist persons who were enrolled in the public schools of Virginia during Massive Resistance between 1954 and 1964, in jurisdictions in which the public schools were closed to avoid desegregation. The enabling legislation was amended in 2005 and 2006 to clarify program requirements and extend educational opportunities to eligible Virginians. Currently, eligible persons may use the award to obtain an adult high school diploma, the General Education Development certificate, CLEP credit, career or technical education or training, transitional education services, a two-year degree, or a four-year degree from an accredited public or private Virginia institution of higher education.

The *Brown v. Board of Education* Scholarship Awards Committee, consisting of legislative and nonlegislative citizen members, administers the Scholarship Program, and is assisted by the Counseling and Technical Advisory Subcommittee which is composed of representatives of relevant state agencies, public and private institutions of higher education, persons with expertise in adult education and literacy, career and technical education and training, college admissions, financial aid, and legislative and public policy. The State Council of Higher Education also provides technical assistance and disburses scholarship funds upon the approval of the Committee.

The Committee meets regularly throughout the year to administer the Program and Fund, make awards, develop policy, resolve matters pertaining to scholarship recipients and approved education programs, conduct public informational sessions for current and prospective *Brown* scholars and training programs for representatives of approved education programs, and establish protocols and relationships with institutions of higher education and other state, local, and private entities to ensure the full implementation of the Program.

Numerous inquiries concerning the Program are received throughout the year from parents, guidance counselors, high school and college students, adults in- and -out-of-state, potentially eligible persons, and state, local, and national media. For the 2007-2008 academic year, the Committee approved 44 persons for scholarships of which 29 awards have been disbursed to approved education programs on behalf of scholarship recipients. The number of awards and funds disbursed changes throughout the year because some scholarship recipients elect to begin their studies during the spring and summer terms. Currently, *Brown* scholars are enrolled in GED and adult high school diploma programs, community colleges, and public and private senior institutions of higher education in Virginia. To assist *Brown* scholars with educational expenses which cannot be met through the Program, the Committee has informed applicants and recipients concerning the availability of other types of financial aid, including the Pell Grant, Stafford Loan, other federal and state assistance programs, and private and philanthropic organizations such as the Carl U. Eggleston Foundation, which was established to help *Brown* scholars defray the costs of required institutional fees and expenses directly related to their school attendance.

Since the inception of the program, several *Brown* scholars have completed their individualized education goals. Some have obtained the GED, career and technical skills training, associate degrees, and others have earned baccalaureate degrees. In May 2007, six scholarship recipients became the first college graduates of the Program, completing the requirements for a bachelor's degree at Saint Paul's College. In May 2008, eight additional *Brown* scholars will receive their baccalaureate degrees, and several other scholars will complete non-degree educational programs.

The deadline for scholarship applications is March 1 each year. Awards will be made by the Committee to eligible Virginians until the funds have been exhausted.

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During the 2007 Interim, the *Brown v. Board of Education* Scholarship Awards Committee collaborated with the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission to begin an examination of the implications of the landmark decision in *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1* and *Meredith v. Jefferson County Board of Education*, handed down on June 28, 2007, in which the Court ruled the school desegregation plans in both cases unconstitutional. Many legal scholars have characterized the cases as the most significant public school desegregation decision since *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. The special subcommittee empanelled by the chairmen of the Committee and the Commission consists of representatives of school superintendents, school boards, teachers, school principals, the Department of Education, and other members of the education community. Issues being deliberated by the special subcommittee include the decision of the Court, compliance initiatives of other states, and the implications of the Court's decision for Virginia's public schools, particularly given Virginia's history with and the controversial nature of public school assignment plans, the number of school divisions in predominantly minority populated areas of the Commonwealth, the rapidly growing population of immigrant students, and the need of certain public schools to achieve full state accreditation and to satisfy the requirements of No Child Left Behind. It is the consensus of the special subcommittee to act proactively in an effort to assist the Commonwealth and its school divisions in avoiding potential litigation by recommending appropriate and feasible solutions, only if warranted by its review.

The Committee will resume its meetings in spring 2008. This Executive Summary incorporates the Committee's work since its inception. No formal report of any findings or recommendations of the Committee will be submitted as a Senate Document to the 2008 Session.