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MEMO TO NEWSDESKS, PICTURE DESKS AND NEWSROOMS:

Representative John Buechner (member of the Missouri General Assembly from Kirkwood) and Dr. Paul Smith, Vice-Chancellor for Student Affairs at Washington University, St. Louis, will participate in the release of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights monograph on school desegregation in Kirkwood, Missouri. This monograph is one of 29 prepared during the past year as part of the Commission's nationwide effort.

The press conference will begin at 9 A.M. on August 29, 1977 (Monday) at:

Meacham Park Community Center  
434 Aldridge  
Kirkwood, Missouri

Copies of the report and the Commission's statement, together with the prepared remarks of Rep. Buechner and Dr. Smith, will be available at the conference. There will be no further information until that time.

UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

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Washington, D. C. 20425

FROM: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

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St. Louis, Mo....School desegregation has provided many advantages for the students of Kirkwood R-7 School District, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights concluded in a staff monograph released today. The monograph, one of 29 prepared in connection with the Commission's report, FULFILLING THE LETTER AND SPIRIT OF THE LAW, shows that good faith efforts to desegregate can produce substantial educational benefits for the entire community.

The report documents the history of desegregation efforts in Kirkwood, culminating in the 1975 effort to completely desegregate the schools. This effort, made in the context of broad reorganization of the district, is a splendid example of imaginative planning. The successful involvement of the entire community in the decisionmaking process is an example well worth imitating.

The report shows that the community is aware that much remains to be done. Teachers and principals must give greater support to the effort. Teachers must have additional training to cope

with the twin problems of desegregation and the new teaching methods that have been introduced as part of the reorganization. Greater involvement of the minority community is needed. The report documents the school district's commitment to the continuous effort that successful change requires.

Change is never easy. But the experience in Kirkwood shows that the law of the land can be obeyed without the many disasters opponents of school desegregation insist are inevitable.

The Kirkwood report is one of three prepared for the Commissioners by the Central States Regional Office. The other studies in this region were done in Wichita, Kansas, and Waterloo, Iowa. Together they show peaceful and successful school desegregation in the nation's heartland.

The Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan, factfinding agency concerned with the rights of minorities and women. Chairman Arthur S. Flemming is also Commissioner on Aging of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

Other Commissioners are Vice Chairman Stephen Horn, president of California State University, Long Beach; Frankie M. Freeman, an attorney specializing in estate and corporation law in St. Louis; Manuel Ruiz, an attorney specializing in international law with offices in Los Angeles; and Murray Saltzman, Rabbi, Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation, Indianapolis, Indiana. John A. Buggs is staff director.

# Kirkwood Desegregation Praised by Commission

By Andrew C. Miller  
Education Editor

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights has lauded the desegregation of a suburban St. Louis school district, crediting effective administrative planning and a public-relations program as the keys to success.

But in a report covering the desegregation of the Kirkwood School District the commission said that the principal obstacles to continued success would be the loss of support from the community or the school board.

"The success of desegregation in Kirkwood may be attributed in large measure to effective planning by the administration and a well-orchestrated public-relations campaign that involved the community without surrendering the ultimate decision-making powers of the school authorities," the commission concluded in a 16-page report.

The report was released this week as one of 29 studies of desegregated U.S. school systems. The regional civil-rights office, based in Kansas City, conducted the report.

The Kirkwood desegregation plan went into effect in the 1975-76 school year in the 6,400-student district after the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare had sought desegregation. About 13 per cent of the district's enrollment is minority race, predominantly black.

Four elementary schools were closed in the plan, two of which were all white, one all black and one with a 25 per cent black enrollment. In addition, secondary school grade levels were realigned.

Bussing in the district rose from 50 to 2,300 students after the plan. The report indicated, however, that the exact number of students bussed for de-

segregation was not available since the district agreed to bus all district students who lived too far from school.

As a result of the plan, the commission said, the number of black students at three elementary schools was increased and the chance to develop better education programs was provided at the secondary-school level.

The report outlined district efforts, in the face of doubts about the plan, to inform parents through a series of fact sheets and coffees. A district desegregation specialist worked to improve communication with parents, the commission added.

Despite some complaints, the report said, there was general community and school satisfaction with the plan.

"Some minority students felt uncomfortable attending a majority white rather than black school, and there was some inter-racial strife at the middle-school level, but student adjustment was reported to be generally smooth," the commission concluded.

In numerical terms, the commission said, desegregation had succeeded in Kirkwood. But educational success still depends on support the school administration receives from the school board, the community and teaching staff, the report stated.

It cautioned the school administration to encourage faculty support and prevent any discrimination against blacks inside school buildings and classrooms.

The civil-rights commission is an independent federal agency concerned with the rights of minorities and women, and has been a strong proponent of school desegregation in past reports. It makes reports and recommendations to the President and Congress.

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# Kirkwood Praised For Its School Integration

*St Louis Post DISPATCH 8/29/77*

By WILLIAM F. VOGLER  
Of the Post-Dispatch Staff

School desegregation in Kirkwood was a little bit like a visit to the dentist — the actual experience did not justify the previous anxiety, according to a report of the United States Commission on Civil Rights.

"Everyone was relieved that the plan was implemented as smoothly as it was with so little conflict," said the report, which was made public today. "Commu-

nity leaders reported significantly greater satisfaction with the plan after implementation than they had felt before."

Despite the smooth change, the report continued, antagonisms continue. "The administration is aware of this, and is making plans to cope with it," the report said.

"Numerically, desegregation has succeeded," the commission's report said. "Whether it will succeed as an educational proposition remains to be seen.

Much will depend upon the support the administration obtains from the School Board, the community and the teaching staff."

Problems facing the district served to aid in its desegregation, the commission reported. Financial problems dictated adjustment of school boundaries and the closing of four primary schools. School enrollment was dropping along with school revenues.

In addition, the federal Office for Civil Rights made it clear that desegregation in Kirkwood "was a legal necessity."

Before the School Board adopted the desegregation plan in February 1975, the district bused only a small percentage of its students. The new plan called for transporting almost 2300 students.

Doubts about the plan were widespread, particularly among the parents most affected by the closing of the four elementary schools, the report said.

However, much of the doubt was overcome by effective planning and an extensive public information campaign — including more than 350 coffee hours throughout the district.