

January 15th, 2016

Dear Parent or Guardian:

I am pleased to notify you that your son or daughter is one of thirty students in Rockingham County Public Schools that has been selected to participate in the *"Farmville Tour Guides Project."* This is a grant-funded independent study that requires students to research a chapter of Virginia's civil rights history in preparation for a special field trip to Farmville, Virginia. However, rather than *listening* to a tour guide's interpretation of this story, these students will conduct their *own research*, discover stories of their *own interest*, and present this information to their peers on a student-led field trip!

This unique project is made possible by a grant from the Rockingham Educational Foundation, Inc. (REFI) and in cooperation with the Moton Museum in Farmville, Virginia. This museum is housed in the former R.R. Moton High School that previously served the black students of Prince Edward County from 1939-1959. Virginia's previous segregation policy not only separated students by race, but also resulted in disproportionate funding that produced black schools that were overcrowded, inadequate, and unequal. On April 23rd, 1951, the students of R.R. Moton High School went on strike in protest of these glaring inequalities. This historic demonstration evolved into a class-action lawsuit that was later combined with four other school desegregation cases that collectively went before the Supreme Court in 1954 as *Brown v. the Board of Education*. Despite the Court's ruling that segregation was unconstitutional, Virginia and several other states mounted a "Massive Resistance" campaign to prevent integration. When these policies were similarly struck down by the courts as unconstitutional, the Prince Edward County Board of Supervisors responded in 1959 by closing down its public school system. The county's schools remained closed for the next five years until a Supreme Court decision forced them to reopen on an integrated basis in 1964. No other community in the United States resorted to such extreme measures to avoid integration.

Despite the tragic nature of these events, the Farmville community has recently made strides to embrace this chapter of their history. The "Farmville Tour Guides Project" will give our students the opportunity to share this inspirational story on the actual grounds where these events unfolded. It's also important to note that the trip will take place on **Thursday, April 21st, 2016** – *two days before the 65th anniversary of the R.R. Moton student strike!* Securing this particular date has enabled us to invite a number of former Moton students to join us for the day. I'm excited to announce that Rockingham County Schools Superintendent, Dr. Carol Fenn, as well as members of the County School Board are also planning to attend. This honor certainly demands our *best work*, so please make sure that your son or daughter is regularly communicating with their fellow group members in order to prepare an excellent presentation. In order to give you and your child further information about this unique experience, I have included a copy of the article that ran in the *Daily News Record* about last year's project.

A companion website has recently been created in order to share project guidelines, digital resources, and other news related to this experience. Students will need to access this site for important materials such as articles, PowerPoints, and videos that will support their individual research projects. The site can be accessed from the following URL address: <http://farmvilletourguides.rockingham.k12.va.us/> I greatly appreciate your support, and I eagerly look forward to the student presentations in Farmville!

Sincerely,

Beau Dickenson
Coordinator of History and Social Science Education
bdickenson@rockingham.k12.va.us