

May 24, 1974

14 Md. Students Suspended For Part in School Disorder

By Alice Bonner
and Donald P. Baker
Washington Post Staff Writers

Fourteen students, eight black and six white, were suspended from Richard Montgomery High School in Rockville yesterday for their part in a racial disorder at the school last Friday.

Classes resumed yesterday with 20 policemen, about half of them in uniform on duty inside and outside the school.

Classes were dismissed at noon Friday after two angry groups of black and white students squared off on the school lawn. The crowd was dispersed and there was no fighting, but 10 white students were arrested for refusing to obey police orders to leave.

In addition to the 14 suspended as a result of last week's disorder, five, all black, were suspended yesterday for violations of rules, including a list of "unusual measures" issued by principal Dr. Thomas Warren, for the "tense" situation.

"We are not going to let a small number of kids who are disruptive prevent those who want to go to school," Warren said. He said the police were there to "avoid physical violence" and would remain through this week "or longer if necessary."

No arrests were made yesterday, but police escorted one of the suspended students from the school when he refused to leave. The maximum suspension is five days.

The 14 suspended students, identified as leaders in the disorder, and their parents met with school officials yesterday morning instead of reporting to classes. They were told not to return to school until after the Memorial Day holiday. Blacks and whites met separately.

The six white students, including two of those arrested Friday, met at Tuckerman Elementary School with Dr. Francis W. Curran, area supervisor of pupil services, and police community relations officer Mike Blasher.

Blasher explained to the students and their parents that only white students were arrested on Friday because the blacks left before police gave the order to disperse.

As only 16 school days remain after the suspension, the two seniors in the group were told they could "finish their course requirements and exams without returning" to the school. The other students were told they could transfer to a different school next year "if they felt they couldn't handle the situation," at Richard Montgomery, Curran said.

The meeting ended after about an hour with the seniors indicating they might not return, according to Curran.

At the same time, the eight black students, four of them seniors, met at school administration headquarters with several of their parents, community leaders and school human relations.

The black students were also given director Wilma Fairley the option to transfer.

See MONTGOMERY, B2, Col. 5

14 at Richard Montgomery High Suspended for Part in Disorder

5-21-74

MONTGOMERY, From B1
or not return this year, but they unanimously agreed to return to school after the suspensions.

At Mrs. Fairley's suggestion, they decided to request a meeting with the suspended white students to "discuss matters of mutual concern." However, that decision was made after the whites had concluded their meeting and no response was possible.

Instead the black students met yesterday afternoon with assistant principal Edward Alle, Curran and other school officials. They asked officials to help arrange a meeting with the white students and to help them get homework assignments during the suspension, according to Mrs. Fairley.

The black students ex-

pressed concern over missing five school days and questioned the method of identifying the 14 as those leading the disorder, Mrs. Fairley said.

Principal Warren said he and other school administrators identified those 14 students as being "out front" of the two groups they were trying to keep apart on Friday.

Mrs. Fairley said she expected the black and white students to meet today or Wednesday, "if the whites agree."

Curran said racial troubles at the school, which has 112 blacks among its 1,397 pupils, contributed to the resignation on April 1 of J.M. McHale as principal. McHale asked to be reassigned as a teacher. The high school also lost its black assistant principal, William Bowen, on that date, but he

has been replaced by another black, Edward Allen.

After the new regulations were announced in classrooms yesterday, a dozen white students walked to the nearby county office building, where they met in the parking garage with County Executive James P. Gleason. They complained that they had not been allowed to return to school, after leaving the campus "to buy cigarettes and get some lunch." One boy complained that we are "the poor, underprivileged whites" who are being discriminated against. Gleason offered to return to the campus with them, to assure that they could be readmitted, but although it was only 12:20 p.m., they declined, saying, "school's over for today."