Unit Title: Desegregation and Massive Resistance in Virginia

Overview:
In this unit, a heterogeneous group of fourth grade students will understand the relationship between desegregation and Massive Resistance in twentieth century Virginia. They will learn about the changes that occurred in Virginia as a result of the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement. Students will make connections between key events, such as *Brown v. Board of Education*, and their impact on Virginia. Through the use of primary resources, secondary resources, games, and learning activities students will link key terms and individuals with an understanding of the time period.

Historical Background:
When the Confederacy surrendered in 1865, Virginia had to rewrite its constitution to gain admission back into the Union. Although their new constitution appeased the Union, many of the political leaders held the same mindset regarding African Americans they believed prior to the Civil War.

Reconstruction won slaves emancipation but not equal rights. During Reconstruction, African Americans enjoyed a short period of political freedoms such as holding office and voting. However, this progress soon ended after the close election of 1877 resulted in a decision that ended Reconstruction to insure the electoral victory of Republican presidential candidate, Rutherford B. Hays. Republicans abandoned efforts to secure the rights of African Americans and Democrats regained control of their states. Though African Americans were emancipated from the technicalities of slavery, their personal rights were still limited. As Virginia shifted from a predominately rural to a more urban society, life for African Americans shifted as well. Railroads, new industries, and growth of cities provided new jobs for African Americans. Yet, many still worked on former plantations trapped into sharecropping on the land of wealthy landowners. This was very much a hierarchical relationship with the African American sharecropper being treated more like a slave than a tenant and the landowner more like a master than a landlord.

Soon, rights disappeared on the heels of the arrival of Jim Crow laws instituted by white segregationists. Many states wrote their new constitutions in such a way as to allow the continued disenfranchisement of African Americans. The Jim Crow laws paved the path for legalized segregation. In 1892, the court case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* set the precedent for this type of segregation. It ruled that African Americans could be legally separated from whites as long as they were provided with an “equal” alternative. However, their alternative schools and facilities were far from equal. Opposition to segregation continued to grow and activists, both African American and white, fought to change the
laws. After World War II, African Americans continued to demand equal treatment and recognition of their rights as American citizens. This time period became known as the modern Civil Rights Movement. The power of the individual activist was focused in such organizations as the NAACP. In 1909, W.E.B. DuBois and Ida B. Wells-Barnett were founding members. In 1954, these efforts culminated in a U.S. Supreme Court case, *Brown v. Board of Education*. “Separate but equal” was declared unconstitutional. All public schools were required to integrate. Not all states wished to comply. Several counties in Virginia closed their public schools rather than integrate. Senator Harry F. Byrd, from Virginia, led this movement called Massive Resistance. The failure of this movement was determined by a court ruling requiring all public schools to re-open and integrate.

**Major Understanding/Objectives:**

**Objectives:**
Students will:
- Define the terms, “segregation,” “integration,” and “desegregation.”
- Interpret the impact of segregation on both the political and social lives of African Americans.
- Recognize the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1954 that “separate but equal” public schools were unconstitutional (*Brown v. Board of Education*).
- Understand that Harry F. Byrd Sr. led a Massive Resistance movement against integration of public schools.
- Understand that Virginia’s government reacted to integration by establishing a policy of Massive Resistance.
- Understand that some public schools were closed to avoid integration.
- Explain how the policy of Massive Resistance failed.
- Recognize that Virginia’s public schools were integrated as a result as the failure of Massive Resistance.
- Recognize the courageous leadership and persistence of African Americans in their struggle to achieve civil rights.

**Standards of Learning:**

**Skills**

**VS.1** The student will develop skills for historical and geographical analysis including the ability to:
a) identify and interpret artifacts and primary and secondary source documents to understand events in history
b) determine cause and effect relationship.
c) compare and contrast historical events.
d) draw conclusions and make generalizations.
e) make connections between past and present.
f) sequence events in Virginia history.
g) interpret ideas and events from different historical perspectives.

Content
VS. 9: The student will demonstrate knowledge of 20th century Virginia by:
b) identifying the social and political events in Virginia linked to desegregation and Massive Resistance and their relationship to national history.

- **Terms to Know:**
  1. Desegregation: abolishment of racial segregation
  2. Integration: full equality of all races in the use of public facilities
  3. Massive Resistance: The political and legal policy developed by Virginia to prevent school desegregation

- **Desegregation and Massive Resistance in Virginia:**

  The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1954 (*Brown v, Board of Education*) that “separate but equal” public schools were unconstitutional.

  All public schools, including those in Virginia, were ordered to integrate.

  Led by Harry F. Byrd Sr., Virginia’s government established a policy of Massive Resistance which fought to “resist” the integration of public schools.

  Some schools were closed to avoid integration.

  The policy of Massive Resistance failed and Virginia’s public schools were integrated.