
Lucasville School: A Small, but Significant Building in Prince William County
Teacher's Guide



Reporting Category: United States History: 1865 to the Present

Topic: Reconstruction; Reshaping the Nation 1877 to the early 1900s.

Primary SOLs: VUS.7; VUS.8; USI.9; USII.1; USII.2; USII.3; VS.1; VS.7; VS.8; VS.9

Materials: Interactive Video, Discussion Questions; (see attached).

Directions:

Students will watch an educational video that provides a brief history of the founding of Lucasville School and why its founding is significant to Prince William County and Virginia history. The video will tie into this worksheet that students can complete or discuss with their teacher as part of their lesson.

Context:

The Importance of Lucasville School

Lucasville School is a reconstructed one-room schoolhouse that was open from 1885 to 1926 to new generations of African Americans in the years after the Civil War. African Americans emerged from slavery with a strong desire for literacy. Freedmen admired those who had learned to read and write during slavery and viewed literate African Americans as social and moral leaders. Education could help them achieve political and economic independence and determine their own future.

In 1870, Virginia's Legislature established a statewide system of free public schools for all citizens. The Manassas District School Board authorized an elementary school for the Lucasville neighborhood in November 1883. In November 1884, the School Board hired H.W. Lloyd to build the school, a job Lloyd finished by March 1885. Lucasville School remained in operation for most of those years until it permanently closed in 1926.

Lucasville School's students ranged from grades one through six. Each student's lessons were suited to his or her grade level. Children studied mathematics, geography, penmanship, reading and history. Most children who attended County 'Colored' schools studied Black History in February during Abraham Lincoln's birthday week. At least seventeen men and women taught at Lucasville School, including Alice and William Taylor who alternately taught at the school from 1906 until the school closed. Some were certified teachers while others were hired on the condition that they complete further training. Some Lucasville School teachers may have trained at Jennie Dean's Manassas Industrial School for Colored Youth which opened in 1894.

After the school permanently closed in 1926, the building was sold at auction and moved to a local farm across present day Route 234. There it remained intact until it was dismantled in 2005 and relocated to its current location. By then the structure had greatly deteriorated. However, the reconstructed school contains a few of the original boards. Between December 2005 and February 2008, Lucasville School was dismantled and reconstructed through the efforts of citizens, County officials and Public Homes, Inc and now serves as a museum to remind us of earlier County citizens' efforts to challenge racism and create an effective and lasting public education system.

Exercise (can be used as a separate worksheet or as discussion questions for the classroom):

Name: _____

Observation & Interpretation: Take a Tour of Lucasville School!

Watch the accompanying video telling the story of Lucasville School and why it is important to Virginia and Prince William County History. Answer the following questions on the worksheet.

1. Context: The earliest documented schools dedicated to the instruction of African American children were not founded in the late 19th century. Historians have identified the Williamsburg Bray school as the earliest known school in the United States dedicated to the formal education of Black children. The Williamsburg Bray school was founded in 1760 in Williamsburg, Virginia. Additional schools were founded across the country: African Free School (1787, New York), Noyes Academy (1835, New Hampshire), the African Institute (now Cheyney University, 1837, Pennsylvania), and the Parkersburg Colored School (1862, West Virginia).

Question: Why do you believe African Americans of the past thought it was incredibly important to receive an education?

2. Context: The Reconstruction Amendments were passed to help newly freed African Americans achieve social, political, and financial equality and fully integrate into free society after the Civil War.

Question: What were the impacts of the Reconstruction amendments that led to the opening of Lucasville School?

3. Question: What years was Lucasville School open?

4. Question: What are some of the differences that you see at Lucasville School compared to your school?

5. Question: What were some of the subjects students learned at Lucasville School?

6. Context: While the 1869 revised Virginia Constitution expanded public education across the state, it did not mandate children's attendance in school. Compulsory education legislation that mandated children's attendance in school came decades later. Lucasville School was ultimately forced to close because it struggled to maintain a quota of 10 students per school year. Many other rural schools in Prince William County suffered the same fate.

Question: What were likely some of the obstacles that prevented children from attending school on a regular basis in the late 19th century?

7. Context: Many rural schoolhouses across Virginia were one-room schoolhouses, like Lucasville School. These schoolhouses provided just enough space for one teacher to provide instruction to all students across age and grade ranges. In Lucasville School's earliest years, instructors taught one grade at a time while other grades awaited instruction. In 1907, the Montessori educational method was developed. This method emphasized hands-on learning and collaborative learning environments. In rural schools like Lucasville School, it would not have been uncommon to have the older children assist the younger ones with their assignments.

Question: Are there any elements of your school instruction today that incorporate the Montessori Method?

Additional Resources:

1. **Emancipation Proclamation** <https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured-documents/emancipation-proclamation>
2. **Reconstruction Amendments** <https://constitutioncenter.org/education/classroom-resource-library/classroom/the-reconstruction-amendments>
3. **Map of Prince William County African American History Sites**
<https://www.historicprincewilliam.org/county-history/maps/scheel.html>
4. **Secondary Resource Analysis Worksheet** https://www.pwcva.gov/assets/2024-01/Lucasville%20School_Grade%206.pdf
5. **Emancipation Proclamation Enrichment Activity** https://www.pwcva.gov/assets/2024-01/Lucasville%20School%20_%204.pdf
6. **Prince William County African American History Trail** <https://www.visitpwc.com/history/trails-tours/black-history>