

2009 Virginia Women in History

LESSON NAME:

Creating a Successful Community: Virginia Estelle Randolph and the Jeanes Teachers

VIRGINIA SOL CORRELATIONS:

K.1, 1.10, 1.12, 2.10, 2.12, VUS.1, VUS.14, CE.1, CE.12, GOVT.1, GOVT.17, GOVT.18

INTRODUCTION:

Virginia Estelle Randolph, a Henrico county educator, was the first Jeanes Supervisor Industrial Teacher in the United States. As a supervisor, Randolph worked to improve vocational training in elementary and secondary schools for African American children. Her approach to education was based on practicality, creativity, and parental involvement.

PRIMARY SOURCES:

- *A Brief Report on the Manual Training Work Done in the Colored Schools of Henrico County, Va., for Session 1908–1909*
- Virginia Randolph [School], Henrico County. Computer file. Richmond: Library of Virginia, 1998.

HISTORY:

Anna T. Jeanes was a wealthy Quaker from Philadelphia who had set aside money (one million dollars) to assist in the development of rural schools for African American children in the South and for the employment of supervisors dedicated to providing training and education. The news of her gift was reported in numerous papers across America and became known as the Jeanes Fund. Virginia Estelle Randolph was able to improve African American education in Virginia when she was named Jeanes Supervisor Industrial Teacher by the superintendent of Henrico County schools, Jackson T. Davis. As a Jeanes teacher Randolph was involved not only in curriculum development, but also in training for teachers.

ACTIVITIES:

Using Randolph's model, how can students, teachers, and parents improve their current school system and local community? Discuss ways in which Randolph gave back to the community. What personal traits did Randolph have that assisted her in achieving success and becoming a positive community member? Have students discuss how they participate in society. Develop a class project in which your students can give back to the community. Do they work for a cause or have a talent? Help students by suggesting methods by which they could contribute to their school or community.

Randolph was a firm believer in learning through doing and combined academic instruction with lessons on cooking, weaving, and gardening. How can students take classroom instruction to a new level and apply what they have learned? Using the Randolph model of instruction, have students organize a "School Improvement League." Students should be responsible for coming up with a plan of action, raising funds, marketing activities within the school, and increasing membership by soliciting the help of parents, teachers, and other students. Students should be assessed on the final product, what was made, how the school was improved, who was involved, the school's benefit from the improvements, etc.

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Suggested Reading:

Jones, Lance G. E. *The Jeanes Teacher in the United States, 1908–1933*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937.

Brown, Linda Bigger. “Schooling for Blacks in Henrico County, Virginia 1870–1933, with an Emphasis on the Contributions of Miss Virginia Estelle Randolph.” Ed.D. diss., Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 1990.