

teacher, who once was a principal in the city, said it was "a real tragedy to see what education had come to." By the mid-1970s, public education in Wilmington had reached rock bottom.

During the late-1960s and early-1970s the prominent sociologist James S. Coleman argued that busing for racial balance offered the best solution to the problems of urban education. He maintained that inner-city children "who themselves may be undisciplined" should be assigned to classrooms that were "highly disciplined." If this was done, Coleman said, the problem students "would take on the characteristics of their classmates and be governed by the norms of the classrooms, so that middle-class values would come to govern the integrated classrooms. In that situation both white and black children would learn." Because of his prominence as a scholar and because of his untiring advocacy of busing for racial balance, the National Observer dubbed Coleman, "The Scholar Who Inspired Busing."

Coleman's sociology assumed that, as federal Judge Simon Sobeloff once explained, "the quality of a school depends largely on its 'class climate,' and that middle class schools are better." Since "white" was presumed to be synonymous with "middle class" and "black" the same as "lower class," the purpose of integration was to create schools with "enough middle class students to establish the class character of the school and . . . a substantial number of lower-class children to benefit from it."

In interviews, depositions, and courtroom testimony throughout the country, Coleman and other liberal sociologists and educators touted the benefits that black children would receive if they were dispersed and educated in predominantly white classrooms. It was partly on the basis of Coleman's testimony that Judge J. Skelly Wright, in Washington D.C., in 1967,, concluded that "Negro students' educational achievement improves when they transfer into white or integrated educational institutions." In Charlotte, in 1969, Judge James B. McMillan mentioned the "alarming contrast in performance" between black and white students, which he said "cannot be explained solely in terms of cultural, racial or family background" and which could be reduced by "transferring underprivileged black children from black schools into schools with 70% or more white students." In Denver, in 1970, Judge William E. Doyle similarly said that racial imbalance was "a major factor producing inferior schools and unequal educational opportunity."

When the Delaware desegregation case later went before the federal courts, however, the judges disavowed the rationale of liberal sociology. This may have been because by then James S. Coleman (but not many other liberals) had renounced his belief that blacks would gain academically if they attended integrated classrooms. Contrary to his earlier supposition, Coleman reported, further research indicated that blacks were not benefiting from integration. What happened instead, Coleman