

The story of Prince Edward County schools – Biography of Robert F. Kennedy

The Early Years:

Robert F. Kennedy was born Nov. 20, 1925, in Brookline, Massachusetts, the seventh child of Rose and Joseph P. Kennedy. At age two, he moved to Riverdale, New York, where he lived until 6th grade. His family traveled to London, England, for two years with his father, Joseph Kennedy, who was the U.S. ambassador to England.



After high school, Robert F. Kennedy joined the Navy as an apprentice during World War II. After the war, he attended Harvard University, where he played varsity football and other sports. When he was older, he loved to play touch football games with friends and family and even climbed the highest mountain in North America, Mt. Kennedy, named for his brother, President John F. Kennedy. He later graduated from University of Virginia Law School.

A Life of Public Service:

In 1960, he helped his brother John F. Kennedy become president. After the election, he was appointed U.S. attorney general. As attorney general he took on those who violated civil rights, whether they were in government, law enforcement or on the streets. He fought organized crime and stood up for African-Americans, helping them exercise their right to vote, attend integrated schools and use all public facilities.

New York's Senator:

In 1963, his brother President Kennedy was killed. Soon afterwards, he resigned as attorney general and ran successfully to become a U.S. senator from New York the following year. He created programs for underprivileged children and students with disabilities in New York state. Kennedy loved children. He and his wife Ethel had 11 children who would often visit him at work. He worked to make sure all children could obtain a good education, a decent place to live and enough food to eat.

In 1968, he ran for U.S. president. His candidacy inspired thousands of young people across the country to get involved in politics and brought together people of many different races. Sadly, after a campaign event June 5, 1968, in Los Angeles, California, Robert Kennedy was shot and later died.

Courage to Stand Up and Speak Out:

Robert F. Kennedy was not afraid to go after criminals who broke the law, especially those who hurt others or did not respect the rights of other citizens because they were of a different race. He believed all people were born with basic human rights that must be protected. In 1961 Robert F. Kennedy took on the task of reopening Prince Edward County Schools in Virginia. After years of battling in the courtroom, he tried another route and raised enough private money to create the Free School Association which was open to all students in Prince Edward County fall 1963. By fall of 1964, Prince Edward County reopened all their schools. In 1966, he traveled to South Africa and told students "We must recognize the full human equality of all of our people ...We must do it for the single and fundamental reason that it is the right thing to do."