

[Back to previous page](#)



document 1 of 1

## **Brown v. Board of Education - 50 years later Segregation creeps back into schools**

**Indianapolis Star** [Indianapolis, Ind] 16 May 2004: A.1.

### **Abstract**

Left sitting at the city's public school desks typically are poor, black or Hispanic students -- most of them increasingly isolated from their white peers. Payne graduated from eighth grade at all-black School 87 less than a month after U.S. Supreme Court justices had determined that 20 black Topeka, Kan., schoolchildren -- including Oliver Brown's daughter -- could not receive an equal education because they were forced to attend underserved segregated schools.

---

### **Full Text**

Court-ordered busing in the 1980s was so effective at IPS School 87 that the student body was a near-perfect racial mix.

Today, nine out of 10 students are black, and diversity is something that's taught and not seen.

Monday is the anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark Brown v. Board of Education decision that struck down "separate but equal" schooling 50 years ago. Yet, 33 years after Indianapolis Public Schools began busing for racial balance, the city's schools are nearly as segregated as they were in the early 1970s.

Tens of thousands of students, most of them white, have either moved out of the district or flocked to private, parochial or public charter schools in the area, disrupting the racial balance.

Left sitting at the city's public school desks typically are poor, black or Hispanic students -- most of them increasingly isolated from their white peers.

School administrators see the trend worsening as IPS absorbs more black students who would have been bused to schools in adjoining townships under a court-ordered desegregation plan that began phasing out five years ago.

"I can remember when it was almost 50-50 here, the students, teachers, even classroom assistants," said Betty T. Howard, who has spent 20 of her 49 years as an elementary teacher at IPS School 87. "You could really see the change over time."

Now, busing for racial balance is waning. Instead, districts are returning to neighborhood schools, and the overarching goal is to improve achievement.

"School desegregation is dying a slow death," said attorney Kevin D. Brown, an Indiana University Law School professor and author of "Race, Law and Education in a Post-Desegregation Era."

More than seven out of 10 black students nationwide now attend predominantly minority schools, according to the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University. And even after years of forced school integration, black students continue to lag behind whites in achievement.

For example, 57 percent of black third-graders overall in IPS passed the English portion of the 2003 Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress-Plus exam, compared with 72 percent of their white classmates.

In 1971, the first year IPS began busing for integration, 91 of the district's 106 elementary schools had enrollments that were at least 75 percent black or white. In 1981, only three of 77 elementary schools were 75 percent white or black. Today, 31 of the 56 facilities with elementary students are at least 75 percent black or white.

IPS Superintendent Duncan Pat Pritchett is concerned that students of color in his district aren't exposed nearly enough to white students.

Without that interaction, educators believe, some youngsters' views of different cultures might be rooted in fear and ignorance.

"A lot of attitudes are shaped when kids are young. We don't want to lose that," Pritchett said.

Driven to succeed

Pat Payne thinks fondly back to a time when she carried her books down School 87's narrow hallways. A time when every classmate -- and every teacher -- looked, talked and lived like her.

It was 1954, a year that would change the course of public education in America -- first in the South, and eventually, in larger northern cities like Indianapolis.

Payne graduated from eighth grade at all-black School 87 less than a month after U.S. Supreme Court justices had determined that 20 black Topeka, Kan., schoolchildren -- including Oliver Brown's daughter -- could not receive an equal education because they were forced to attend underserved segregated schools.

She remembers the Brown decision and the reasons for it, but she was having none of it. She was convinced that she could learn, even excel, in a segregated classroom.

Her parents dreamed of sending her to college and wanted her to attend racially mixed Shortridge High School in the Mapleton-Fall Creek neighborhood. But she begged them to let her follow her classmates to the all-black Attucks High School.

While Shortridge had a college-prep program, Attucks had a teaching staff filled with black college-level instructors -- many with doctorates who were denied jobs in all-white colleges.

What Attucks' teachers lacked in resources, they made up with talent and determination to teach their students how to survive, Payne believes.

"They knew we could learn, believed in our ability to learn. And they took no mess from us," said Payne, now director of multicultural education for IPS.

Payne said there were strengths to segregation: Parents, teachers and principals lived, shopped and attended church in the same neighborhood.

If children had problems, black parents didn't have to wait until school opened -- they had parent-teacher conferences on evenings and weekends, in barbershops and at club meetings, Payne said.

But those segregated housing patterns are why the U.S. Department of Justice sued IPS in 1968 and later, the city, state and surrounding school systems.

The lawsuit contended that state and local officials had contributed to segregation by creating a unified governing structure in Marion County for most public services except education.

U.S. District Judge S. Hugh Dillin agreed and ordered IPS to desegregate schools by busing students within its own boundaries beginning in 1973. Eight years later, another order by Dillin forced IPS to bus 5,600 black students a year to six adjoining township school districts.

Even before the initial court order, IPS had begun to address segregation. Soon after the lawsuit was filed, the district agreed to a three-year plan to integrate faculty, and started shuffling white and black teachers. In anticipation of the desegregation order, it began busing white and black students in 1971.

Stanley Warren, retired academic affairs dean at DePauw University, remembers the confusion and frustration of black IPS teachers in those early efforts.

In 1968, Warren taught world history at Attucks. The next year, he was shipped to Howe High School on the city's Eastside, a school with one other black teacher and 13 black students -- all residents of the Children's Guardian Home. He left the district the next year.

"They cherry-picked the best black teachers from Attucks and sent in less-qualified white teachers who cared nothing about helping black students achieve," Warren said. "I would've continued my career in IPS had I not been transferred."

Karl R. Kalp, a former IPS superintendent who oversaw the two court orders, said it was difficult to get white teachers to accept assignments at Attucks.

Fallout from the court orders had an immediate impact, altering the population and landscape of neighborhoods across the city.

Student enrollment, which had peaked at 108,743 a year before the lawsuit was filed, began to drop.

Thousands of white parents, many of them more comfortable with all-white neighborhood schools, moved to the suburbs or placed their children in private schools. Many black parents, weary of cross-town bus rides and wary of racial conflicts, also removed their children.

By 1971, enrollment fell to 102,734, with whites making up 62 percent. Today, enrollment is 40,084, and black students make up 58 percent. The student body also became poorer as fewer children came from wealthier neighborhoods.

For a decade, though, the forced integration seemed to work -- on paper and in the classroom.

At School 87, where the racial mix hovered around 55 percent black during the early 1980s, learning reflected the melting pot of pupils.

Teachers remember having international festivals, where students would wear clothes and bring in food that reflected their different ethnic heritages.

"I think the black kids might have, more or less, picked on the white kids a little early on, but once they got to know each other, they were just kids," recalls Wanda J. Lawrence, a fourth- and fifth-grade teacher who has been at the school for 20 years. "They didn't really think about color."

But plummeting enrollment began to take a toll. The district that once boasted 128 schools in the mid-1960s was forced to close one-third of them during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.

The loss of students made busing an even bigger financial burden for city school officials. Each student leaving IPS meant a portion of state money -- now \$5,512 per pupil -- that the district no longer received. Each school closing created a longer bus ride for remaining students.

And since IPS was the guilty plaintiff in both federal busing orders, taxpayers in the district paid much of the cost to transport IPS children across the city and black children from IPS to the suburbs.

Today, school officials are unsure how many millions of dollars have been spent over time to integrate IPS internally because they cannot track those costs in the transportation budget, which was \$24.5 million this school year. But taxpayers within IPS have paid more than half a billion dollars since 1981 to transport black students to the townships.

While IPS' student enrollment now includes more minorities, its predominantly white faculty in the early 1970s remains that way. As students left and buildings closed, many black teachers who lacked seniority were laid off after 1980.

Payne says the teachers remaining -- more than three out of four teachers are white -- face challenges in trying to understand and instruct students with whom they have little in common.

"I really believe that some teachers think, 'They can't learn anyway, so why bother?' " she said.

Achievement remains elusive

The main focus of school desegregation -- improving black student achievement -- remains elusive. Within Marion County, black students who attended IPS elementary schools actually out-performed their neighborhood peers who were bused to southern township schools on ISTEP.

An analysis of the percentage of third-graders who passed the exam shows that the IPS students scored at least 10 percentage points higher than their peers in Decatur, Perry and Franklin township school districts on the math

and English portions of ISTEP.

Despite the disruptions, people still support public school integration.

Nearly 70 percent of black parents believe their children don't have the same educational opportunities as whites, according to a recent national Gallup Poll.

Taria Edwards, who lives in the IPS district, wonders whether they will exist for her children.

Edwards, 27, has two children enrolled in kindergarten and first grade in Wayne Township Schools. But a third child will start classes this fall at School 42 in IPS because of the busing phase-out.

Edwards is upset with the upheaval to her family.

"They don't realize the disruption this will have on parents," she said.

As more black children return to IPS, however, school officials admit it will become even harder to integrate schools through busing. Under a 1998 court settlement, each school must maintain at least an 85 percent-15 percent black-white student enrollment.

With far fewer schools today and more special and magnet programs, IPS will continue to bus most students. When discussions begin on a new redistricting plan for 2006, the focus will be less on busing for desegregation and more on neighborhood schools.

"We know we can get kids closer to home or to their neighborhoods," Pritchett said.

In the aftermath of the Brown decision, some experts believe those kinds of discussions are becoming the standard.

Only a massive influx of urban white families willing to send their children to public schools, or another costly Brown-like lawsuit, might change the course.

Neither is likely, they believe.

"Increasing segregation is a given. There is nothing that is going to stop it. It (Brown) didn't get anywhere close (to the goal)," said IU's Brown. "It's kind of like saying, 'Let's shoot for the sun, and we wind up at the moon.' "

---

### Chronology of IPS desegregation efforts

A look at the judgments and events attempting to desegregate Indianapolis Public Schools and surrounding township districts:

#### 1950s

May 1954: In *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kan.*, the U.S. Supreme Court declares that racial segregation in public schools violates the Constitution. The decision ? based on challenges to school segregation

from several states, including Kansas ? helps fuel the larger movement for civil rights.

May 1955: U.S. Supreme Court orders that schools be desegregated with ?all deliberate speed.?

#### 1960s

July 1964: President Lyndon Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act outlawing segregation in public schools, restaurants and other public facilities.

March 29, 1967: The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People asks federal agencies to investigate IPS policies.

May 31, 1968: The U.S. Justice Department sues IPS in federal court based on Sec. 407 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Judge S. Hugh Dillin is assigned the case.

July 30, 1968: IPS School Board approves a three-year plan to phase out the discriminatory practice of assigning teachers to schools on the basis of race.

#### 1970s

Aug. 18, 1971: Dillin finds IPS guilty of being a ?de jure? segregated school system and orders U.S. school officials to continue with plans to integrate.

July 20, 1973: Dillin orders the transfer of black IPS students to schools in 18 suburban school systems in Marion and surrounding counties and additional desegregation within IPS. The court concludes that an IPS-only plan would lead to white flight. The Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago later ruled the districts outside the county should be excused.

Aug. 20, 1973: Dillin appoints a two-man commission to draft a desegregation plan. The first major reassignments, involving 9,200 elementary pupils in several phases, begins that fall.

June 1974: A federal judge orders school busing in Boston. The decision, aimed at achieving racial balance in the city?s public schools, triggers rioting. Aug. 1, 1975: Dillin issues another desegregation order restricted to Marion County, reassigning 9,500 black IPS students to township schools.

July 1974: A narrowly divided Supreme Court decides that, in most cases, students can?t be forced to move between school districts to carry out desegregation. The ruling effectively blocked officials from pulling students from heavily white suburbs to integrate inner-city schools with large minority populations.

Aug. 18, 1977: The School Board adopts the Indianapolis Public Schools Desegregation Design ? 1978.

July 11, 1978: The Aug. 1, 1975, order is reinstated with minor revisions.

#### 1980s

July 14, 1980: The IPS reassignment plan is submitted to Dillin and consists of three parts: busing within IPS, transferring black IPS students to schools in six townships and the closure of 11 elementaries.

Aug. 19 to Sept. 7, 1981: The transfer of 5,600 black IPS students to schools in Decatur, Franklin, Lawrence, Perry, Warren and Wayne townships is implemented. The district closes 10 elementaries and Shortridge High School.

1990s

June 22, 1998: IPS and the six township districts sign a settlement to end one-way, intra-district busing. The agreement is a phase-out order that will gradually bring black students back to IPS over time.

\* Students currently in township districts do not return to IPS.

\* School districts in townships reaching black populations of 20 percent stop receiving new kindergarten students from IPS.

\* Township districts never reaching the 20 percent stop receiving new IPS students in the fall of 2004.

\* The Indianapolis Housing Agency agrees to assist low-income families wanting to relocate to township districts as part of the settlement.

1999-2000 school year: Lawrence and Warren township school districts stop receiving new IPS students.

Aug. 19, 2004: Kindergarten students who would have attended schools in Decatur, Franklin, Perry and Wayne townships under the busing order must enroll in IPS for the start of classes this fall.

Source: Indianapolis Public Schools, Gannett News Service

---

Call Star reporter Mark Nichols at (317) 444-6197.

### **Illustration**

Caption: HistoryEducationSocial issues

Copyright 2004 - Indianapolis Star - All Rights Reserved

---

## **Details**

Subject	Elementary schools; Desegregation; Teachers; Secondary schools; School boards; Districts; Colleges & universities; College students;
---------	---

Black college students

Company / organization	Name: Indianapolis Public Schools NAICS: 611110
Title	Brown v. Board of Education - 50 years later Segregation creeps back into schools
Publication title	Indianapolis Star
Pages	A.1
Publication year	2004
Publication date	May 16, 2004
Year	2004
Section	NEWS
Publisher	Gannett Co., Inc.
Place of publication	Indianapolis, Ind.
Country of publication	United States
Publication subject	General Interest Periodicals--United States
ISSN	19302533
Source type	Newspapers
Language of publication	English
Document type	News
ProQuest document ID	240673908
Document URL	<a href="http://search.proquest.com/docview/240673908?accountid=46127">http://search.proquest.com/docview/240673908?accountid=46127</a>



Copyright Copyright 2004 - Indianapolis Star - All Rights Reserved

Last updated 2013-01-04

Database Indianapolis Star

Copyright © 2016 ProQuest LLC. All rights reserved. Terms and Conditions