

[Back to previous page](#)



document 1 of 1

IPS desegregation status once again in judge's hands

Fleming, Leonard N. **Indianapolis Star** [Indianapolis, Ind] 25 Jan 1997: A.1.

Abstract

Dillin heard much testimony from school superintendents, school board members and parents affected over the years by his order. Township attorneys argued that their schools have come to value the black students in their mostly white schools and would fall back in time without them.

Full Text

LEONARD N. FLEMING

The waiting begins.

The destiny of Indianapolis Public Schools is in the hands of

U.S. District Judge S. Hugh Dillin.

Friday marked the last day of the hearing to try to persuade the judge to end the most significant court case in IPS history.

His controversial order was prompted nearly 26 years ago when the U.S. Department of Justice proved that racial segregation dominated the city's public schools.

Dillin said he will rule in February. His decision could please some and devastate others.

On his plate is IPS' request to return - over a 13-year period

- the students he ordered shipped to six surrounding township school districts in 1981.

Wayne, Decatur, Franklin, Perry, Lawrence and Warren townships opposed the plan. They argue that returning the students to IPS would deprive their schools of diversity. Ironically, they vehemently fought against black students coming to their districts 16 years ago. But the situation has become more complicated.

Decatur Township Schools this week unveiled an alternative 13-year plan giving 5,500 students a choice of which district they want to attend.

Under the plan, students could pick either an IPS or township school upon entering an elementary, middle or high school. They could change districts only after completing all the grades in that school.

The plan also calls for Dillin to expand the township transfer areas within IPS boundaries so districts such as Decatur could reach a black student population of 15 percent. The other townships have not taken a stance on the proposal.

Also at stake is IPS' request to end Select Schools, the expensive program that gives parents a limited choice of schools in order to maintain racial quotas. It remains a transportation nightmare for IPS.

The replacement plan would group schools in five enrollment areas, each feeding into a high school.

In order for it to be truly declared unitary, IPS says Dillin

must free the district from Select Schools and return the bused students. But the townships want to keep those students.

Still, IPS officials are not giving up hope.

"I felt that we ended on a very good note," said Superintendent Esperanza Zendejas, who was pleased that Dillin will respond promptly. "That was extremely important to me and to the district."

Zendejas and other IPS officials do not support the Decatur plan, which they say promotes "eternal desegregation in the townships."

At least 15 lawyers were in the courtroom defending interests ranging from the state to the Justice Department.

Dillin heard much testimony from school superintendents, school board members and parents affected over the years by his order.

Throughout the week, Zendejas, her top brass and all seven board members were glued to their courtroom seats.

It appeared that IPS officials were off to a good start. But later in the hearing they suffered setbacks when board members could not explain the policies passed last week to ensure integration.

Township attorneys argued that their schools have come to value the black students in their mostly white schools and would fall back in time without them.

"We feel very strongly they should not be sent back," testified Superintendent Gerald W. Montgomery of Decatur. "They have made a commitment to us. We have made a commitment to them."

"And I believe you will find very strong support for (them) continuing to come to our schools."

In closing arguments, IPS attorney Patricia A. Brannan told Dillin that IPS will never return to racial segregation.

"IPS has molded a new teacher, and a new administrator, a new kind of person who understands and responds to the needs of a wide variety of difficult kinds of children in our schools," she said.

"The court shouldn't worry that we're going to slip away from the policies that we've adopted once the case is dismissed."

Others differed.

John Moss, one of the attorneys who originally filed the desegregation lawsuit on behalf of black students, said it would not serve justice to step backward and get rid of the cross-district busing phase of the plan.

Wayne attorney Jon M. Bailey said the \$29 million the state pays townships is not the reason they want to keep those students.

"They are our students. We have made a promise to them," Bailey said. "This is 1997, not 1981. And so times have changed, attitudes have changed, the approach has changed."

Copyright 1997 - Indianapolis Star - All Rights Reserved

Details

| | |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Subject | Black students; School superintendents; Public schools; |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------|

School districts;
 Segregation;
 Secondary schools;
 Court hearings & proceedings

| | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Company / organization | Name: Indianapolis Public Schools NAICS: 611110 |
| Title | IPS desegregation status once again in judge's hands |
| Author | Fleming, Leonard N |
| Publication title | Indianapolis Star |
| Pages | A.1 |
| Publication year | 1997 |
| Publication date | Jan 25, 1997 |
| Year | 1997 |
| 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 | 240154674 |
| Document URL | http://search.proquest.com/docview/240154674?accountid=46127 |
| Copyright | Copyright 1997 - Indianapolis Star - All Rights Reserved |
| Last updated | 2013-01-05 |
| Database | Indianapolis Star |

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