

When Minorities are the Majority/ A Challenge to Desegregation, the Challenge for Public Education (Minneapolis, A Case Study)

William D. Green, Interim Superintendent of Minneapolis Public Schools and Associate Professor of History at Augsburg College

Abstract

Fifty years after the U.S. Supreme Court held in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional the children in America's urban school districts attend schools that predominantly are racial-isolated. In Minneapolis, the student profile is in stark contrast with the racial demographic of the city's residents. Where 86% of the population is white, 70% of the school children are of color. Indeed, 31% reside in homes where ninety languages, not including English, are spoken. Within this context, desegregation, as it is traditionally defined, is as conceptually anachronistic as it is impossible to achieve.

This paper examines the assumptions of desegregation and argues that desegregation, as assumed in *Brown*, can no longer be the conditional precedent to a quality education. It concludes that where resources are limited, white middle class students are few in number, and government is reluctant to advance the legacy of Earl Warren -- the Chief Justice who delivered the *Brown* decision -- urban school districts like Minneapolis are challenged to provide a quality education in racial isolation. Rather than expending resources on achieving racial balance, more investment must be made in providing equitable access to academic opportunity and professional development. .

Introduction

Fifty years after the U.S. Supreme Court held in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*,¹ that state-sanctioned racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional the children in America's urban school districts continue to attend schools that predominantly are racially-isolated. In Minneapolis, the student profile is in stark contrast with the racial demographic of the city's residents. Where 86% of the population is white, 70% of the school children are of color. Approximately ninety languages are spoken in Minneapolis classrooms and nearly 30% reside in homes where English is not spoken.² Within this context, desegregation, as it is traditionally defined, is as conceptually anachronistic as it is impossible to achieve.

¹ *Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954). The other cases associated with *Brown* were *Harry Briggs, Jr. v. R.W. Elliott*, *Davis v. County Board of School board of Prince Edward County*, *Gebhart v. Bolton*, and *Bolling v. Sharpe* which was heard separately because the defendant was a federal jurisdiction.

² Minneapolis Public Schools *Student Demographics* (Minneapolis 2007). Also see Barbara J. Ronnigen, "Immigrants in Minneapolis" (St. Paul: Minnesota Demographic Center Oct. 6. 2006).

Forum on Public Policy

This paper examines the assumptions of desegregation as a means to academic opportunity and argues that desegregation, as assumed in *Brown*, can no longer be the conditional precedent to a quality education. It concludes that where white middle class students are few in number, and courts were reluctant to advance the legacy of Earl Warren -- the Chief Justice who delivered the *Brown* decision ³ -- urban school districts like Minneapolis are challenged to provide a quality education in racial isolation. Rather than expending resources on achieving racial balance, more investment must be made in providing equitable access to academic opportunity and professional development.

Until the 1970s, the fight against school segregation was largely perceived to be a Southern matter. However, neighborhoods in northern cities were increasingly becoming racially identifiable and the schools reflected the neighborhoods in which they were situated. The U.S. Department of Housing, Education and Welfare (HEW) Office for Civil Rights found that between 1970 and 1974, black school children were more segregated in northern schools than in southern schools, and black school children in midwestern schools experienced the highest percentage of segregation of all regions in the nation.⁴

Inevitably, federal courts in the North began hearing cases and imposing remedies that were intended to create racial balance which was viewed as a means to equitable access. With the Supreme Court's decision in *Swann v. Mecklenburg* which held that busing was a constitutional method for achieving racial balance, a new challenge to desegregation arose.⁵ Because of protests against "forced busing" by ever-growing constituencies politicians at the local, state and federal levels began seeking ways to thwart desegregation remedies, emboldened when President Richard Nixon warned federal officials to cease from implementing

³ Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice* (New York: Vintage 1975).

⁴ Arval A. Morris *The Constitution & American Education* (St. Paul: West Publishing 1980) 743-744.

⁵ *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*, 402 U.S. 1, 27-29 (1971).

desegregation plans, a sentiment that was later echoed by his successor, Gerald Ford.⁶ Nixon further threatened to seek legislation or even a constitutional amendment to prevent courts from promoting racial integration through busing students. Later in the 1970s, Congress barred the use of federal funds as a way to curb mandatory busing.⁷

For whites, their neighborhood was a veritable birthright to which forced busing was a threat. If their neighborhood schools could not be preserved, then they would either fight or move to a safer place. Nixon had already thrown his support behind protecting the suburbs against forced busing with urban schools.⁸ The partnership between the executive and judiciary branches of the federal government that had succeeded in advancing desegregation in the South during the late 1960s fractured by the early 1970s. The Supreme Court decision in a 1974 Michigan case embodied a sign of changing times as the conservative influence of Nixon-appointedees to the court was just then being felt.

In *Millikin v Bradley*, the court narrowly held by a 5 to 4 vote that forced busing between the predominately black school district of Detroit and the predominately white school district of the neighboring suburb was an invalid method for achieving desegregated urban schools. Reversing the district court ruling that inter-district busing was an appropriate remedy, the Supreme Court held that the lower court's order was "based on an erroneous standard and was unsupported by record evidence that acts of the outlying districts effected the discrimination found to exist in the schools of Detroit."⁹ In other words, white parents moving from the city to the suburbs principally to provide better schooling for their children was not discriminatory

⁶ Jon Hillson, *The Battle of Boston* (New York: Pathfinder Press 1977), 5, 35-36.

⁷ Melvin I. Urofsky & Paul Finkelman *A March of Liberty/ A Constitutional History of the United States* vol. II (New York: Oxford University Press 2002) 900.

⁸ John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: a History of African Americans* 7ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill 1994) 517.

⁹ *Millikin v. Bradley*, 418 U.S. 717, 752 (1974).

Forum on Public Policy

against black children nor was it creating a “separate but equal school system.” No law restricted blacks from doing the same, according to the logic of the court. Even if black students became the majority within the urban school system, neither the urban school board nor the suburbs were responsible. Even when evidence showed that black parents were disproportionately denied loans and mortgages compared to white applicants whose income was lower than black applicants¹⁰ such discrimination was not the cause and effect of school board action. And it was not the suburban school board’s design that the tax base supporting urban schools decrease to result in deteriorated schools as the white middle class relocated to the suburbs. In the court’s opinion, it was not segregation, de jure or de facto.

Nixon’s hopes were realized when *Millikin* prohibited federal district courts from imposing inter-district busing against the will of surrounding school districts. Four years later, the court went further to frustrate school desegregation when it held that remedies could not chase white families who moved within the district to escape busing. In Pasadena, California, the school board had begun busing black students to white schools until white supporters of anti-busing began moving to other sections of the city, thereby negating assignments designed to meet desegregation goals of the district and resulting in resegregated schools. Federal Judge John Real, the presiding judge in federal district court who had issued the initial order, instituted yearly adjustments in the busing order to outflank white resistance.¹¹

The newly-elected school board that now reflected the anti-busing mood within the white community appealed the “adjustment” order to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals which, in turn, upheld the implementation order. The Supreme Court, by a 6 to 2 vote reversed by holding that

¹⁰ Massey & Denton, 204-212. See also, “This Loan is Denied,” *Frontline*, produced by Corporation of Public Broadcasting, WGBH Education Foundation, Center of Investigative Researching, Inc., (1 hour), PBS video, 1992, videocassette.

¹¹ Pasadena City Board of Education v. Spangler, 427 U.S. 424 (1976)

Forum on Public Policy

the federal court had no power to make adjustments in a requirement of a desegregation plan once the requirement had been met, even though demographic changes had produced severe racial isolation in the schools. “No one,” held the majority, “disputes that the initial implementation of this plan accomplishes ... racial neutrality... That being the case, the district court was not entitled to require the school to rearrange its attendance zones ... to assure that the racial mix desired by the court was maintained in perpetuity.”¹² This case was later dubbed “the white flight” appeal.¹³

Indeed, white resistance to desegregation in northern communities during the 1970s was as widespread and entrenched as it was in southern communities during the 1950s and 1960s. In some northern cities like Columbus and Dayton, school districts had perpetuated de facto segregation since before *Brown* was decided.¹⁴ In other cities resistance was violent, incited by critics of implementation plans that included forced busing. Mobs firebombed buses in Denver, Pontiac, Michigan, and Boston, and white families boycotted schools. In Boston anti-busing demonstrations and mass marches, and violent attacks against blacks were frequent between 1972 and 1974.

The reaction in Minneapolis was nonviolent but just as reactionary. Since the days when Hubert Humphrey was mayor, Minneapolis had enjoyed a reputation of a city of racial tolerance and the stronghold of the liberal Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party whose leaders included such national political luminaries as Walter Mondale, Don Fraser, Orville Freeman; Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the city had been the state’s commercial center where Pillsbury, Gold Medal and General Mills processed flour that fed the world, and such industries

¹² Id. at 436

¹³ Hillson, 263-264.

¹⁴ Columbus Board of Education v. Penick, 443 U.S. 449 (1979); Dayton Board of Education v. Brinkman, 443 U.S. 526 (1979).

Forum on Public Policy

attracted laborers of all nationalities. It was a city that within a generation could absorb its residents into the social and economic fabric of the community, regardless of race or national origin. However, by the end of the century, even when its economy continued to expand, people of color and poverty were beginning to be left behind, and it was most reflected in the public school population.

Between 1980 and 1990, the number of preschool white children in the city dropped 40 percent. Professor Myron Orfield predicted, “In many transitional neighborhoods of Minneapolis, 75 to 100 percent of the white pre-school children would disappear between census reporting periods.”¹⁵ Indeed, the conventional notion of racial balance – that white students would remain in the majority—was already being threatened.

The vacancies that they left in the city’s schools were quickly filled by the newly-arrived black students who characteristically lacked the basic skills needed for the most elemental of tasks. Black students were increasingly perceived as the embodiment of urban poverty and low academic achievement, as well as the stereotype of the Minneapolis school child.¹⁶

Just as the proportion of white residents decreased in the City of Minneapolis, from 1972 to 2007, total enrollment fell from 65,000 to 32,000 students. Over the same period, the percentage of white student-enrollment dropped from 87% to 33%. Conversely, black enrollment grew proportionately from less than 10% of the overall student population in 1972 to 47% in 2007. Including Asian, Hispanic, Somali, American Indian, and West African students, racial minorities aggregately comprise over 70% of the student population in 2007. Today, the

¹⁵ Myron Orfield, “Economic & Racial Polarization...” *Journal of Public Law & Policy* (Spring, 1996) 281.

¹⁶ An examination of the 1990 U.S. Census of Population and Housing, showed high poverty and distressed neighborhoods experienced high combinations of AFDC cases, single parents, unemployed males, school drop outs, low birth-weight children, teenage motherhood, personal crimes, narcotic crimes, women not receiving prenatal care, female-headed households, and homicides.

Forum on Public Policy

Somali community in Minneapolis is the largest in the country.¹⁷ The West African population is the third largest in the nation and it is expected to become the second largest by the end of the decade.¹⁸

Throughout the 1970s, as black enrollment grew, white families were alarmed at the demographic shift. Seventy percent of families with pre-school children responding to the 1986 Minneapolis Homeowners Survey stated that the city's schools "needed more attention."¹⁹ In 1981, 14 percent reported that they planned to leave the school system within five years. In 1986, the figure rose to 23 percent and in 1993, the figure rose still to 45 percent.²⁰ Even in the more affluent neighborhoods of Minneapolis, the prospect of busing prompted families to move to the suburbs because of their perception of city schools. Orfield wrote, "It was those neighborhoods with the financial means to move that were the most likely to be contemplating such a decision."²¹

The 1980s marked the time when resistance reached a new and critical level: when passive federal regulators and lending practices had the cumulative and covert impact of excluding the minorities from white neighborhoods. Whether it was due to heightened tensions between pro- and anti-busing groups, the steady exodus of white families, or the unnerving influx of black students of poverty, white families with pre-school and school-age children increasingly migrated to the suburbs, secure in the knowledge that *Millikin v. Bradley* would protect them from federal court-ordered desegregation remedies.²² Moreover, the Supreme

¹⁷ Minnesota Public Radio, *Sunday Morning*, April 22, 2007.

¹⁸ Paula Forbes and James A. Cunningham "Desegregation & the Minneapolis Public Schools" *Hamline Journal of Public Law & Policy* 17 (Spring, 1996) 209, 216.

¹⁹ Minneapolis City Planning Department, *Minneapolis Homeownership 1985* at 12 (1986).

²⁰ *Id.* at 11. See also, Minneapolis City Planning Department, *Minneapolis Homeownership 1993* at 23.

²¹ Orfield, 283.

²² *Millikin v. Bradley*, 418 U.S. 717, 752 (1974).

Forum on Public Policy

Court had come to view “white flight” as “extraneous to the business of school boards” and therefore, “unrelated to the initial constitutional violation.”²³

Poor minorities did not have the choice of moving to the suburbs because zoning practices have been adopted in suburban communities to exclude low-income housing.²⁴ Between 1985 and 1990, low-income assistance programs concentrated nearly four times of the county’s subsidized units within Minneapolis alone.²⁵ A report by the United Way found, “The concentration of poverty in Minneapolis ... and the degree of income disparity between the region’s center cities and the suburbs are among the Nation’s highest.”²⁶ During this period only three cities with populations over one million saw their percentage of black residents who live in high poverty areas grow faster than Minneapolis.²⁷

Even blacks with means were subjected to discriminatory practices of the realty and banking industries which directed them to the few black or racially-mixed neighborhoods rather than to white neighborhoods, doing so under the complacency of federal oversight.²⁸ In essence, the consequence of these practices, which mirrored the national housing trend, assured for the maintenance of all-white neighborhoods.²⁹ Simply put: as one Twin Cities metropolitan

²³ Jon Powell, “Segregation and Educational Inadequacy in Twin Cities Public Schools” *Hamline Journal of Public Law & Policy* 17 (Spring, 1996) 337, 359 quoting *Pasadena City Bd. Of Educ. v. Spangler*, 427 U.S. 424, 436 (1976), *Board of Education of Oklahoma City v. Dowell*, 498 U.S. 237, 245-246 (1991); *Freeman v. Pitts.*, 503 U.S. 467 (1992) (holding that racial imbalance in student attendance zones was not tantamount to a showing that the school district was in noncompliance ... with the doctrine under the law... The school district is under no duty to remedy imbalance that is caused by demographic factors.) *Id.* at 494.

²⁴ Barbara Luckerman & Michael Kane, Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, “Land Use Practices: Exclusionary Zoning, DeFacto or DeJure? An Examination of the Practices of Ten Suburban Communities in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, p.10 (1994).

²⁵ Myron Orfield *Metropolitics: A Regional Agenda for Community and Stability, Stability* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press 1997),122.

²⁶ United Way, *Face of the Two Cities: Another Look , Trends Affecting Our Community Through 2000* (United Way, 1995) 9.

²⁷ Paul A. Jargowsky, “Ghetto Poverty Among Blacks in the 1980s” 12 *Journal of .Policy Analysis & Management* 288,306 (1994).

²⁸ Dave Slidmore, “Mortgage rejection rates higher for minorities,” *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 28, 1992, A-15; Douglas S. Massey & Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1993) 229-230.

²⁹ Massey & Denton, 71.

Forum on Public Policy

realtor said in 1993, “You’re always going to find homogeneity of income, of culture, of race. You congregate where people are comfortable – where there are people ‘like me.’”³⁰

Similar practices maintained residential patterns within the city that were racially and socio-economically identifiable and schools reflected the neighborhoods in which they were situated. The St. Paul *Pioneer Dispatch* reported, “[t]he fabled Minnesota good life turned into an illusion for the state’s minorities in the 1980s.”³¹ Minnesota ranked among the worst states in the country in terms of income, poverty rates and unemployment for blacks. During the 1990s, the trend increased. More than 80 percent of poor blacks lived in distressed neighborhoods as compared to 54 percent poor whites.³² In 1992, the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* reported, “Minority people in Minneapolis ... are more likely to live in poverty than minorities in the core cities of any of the nation’s other major metropolitan areas,” and this was reflected in the student population.³³ School health services of the district were their primary source of medical care.³⁴

In 1991 the United States Supreme Court held in *Board of Education of Oklahoma City v. Dowell* that same race neighborhood schools were beyond desegregation mandates if the neighborhood “re-segregated” due to factors other than school district policy. Moreover, the desegregation order that the decision now overruled, had been in place for 13 years and this was long enough. Orders entered in to remedy segregation were not intended to be permanent.³⁵

³⁰ Bob von Sternberg, “Moving Frenzy: Suburbanites can’t sit still,” *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, April 22, 1993, 21A

³¹ Richard Chin, “Minnesota lags U.S. in minority well-being,” *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*, July 24, 1992, A-1; Minnesota State Representative Myron Orfield, memorandum to author, October 31, 1995.

³² Powell, 337, 387 n.299.

³³ Norman Draper, “Twin Cities’ core has worst poverty rate for minorities,” *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, December 13, 1993, A-1.

³⁴ Minneapolis Public Schools, *School Site Services/ Health Related Services, Statement of Need*, 1995 (Minneapolis Public Schools, 1995).

³⁵ *Dowell*, 498 U.S. at 246.

Forum on Public Policy

By the mid 1990s Minneapolis schools were increasingly becoming same-race; and it was permissible by guidelines established by Minnesota law. Districts were required to limit the minority student enrollment in every school building to no more than 15% above the District-wide minority student percentage for the grade level served in each building.³⁶ That year, 50% of the overall student population was minority. In 1993, it was nearly 54%. And in 1995, it was 67.5%. According to state law, the 15% allowance for measuring racial balance was permitted to rise with the growing demographic of minority enrollment. At this rate, by the end of the decade it would be mathematically possible for a school to be 100% minority and still be in compliance.³⁷

In contrast, twenty years earlier, Judge Earl Larson found in *Booker v. Special School District #1* that over 55% of the black students attended schools in which over 30% of the enrolled students were black.³⁸ Less than 10 % of the total student population was black. The Court identified specific schools where it believed that racial segregation existed and found instances where school sizes, employment and student transfer practices, and “optional attendance zones” which allowed white students to “escape” schools with heavy minority enrollment, all had the effect of increasing segregation.³⁹

While concluding that residential patterns within the city of Minneapolis were racially segregated, the court found that public pressure against integration was the factor most responsible for the District’s failure to remedy school segregation. Indeed, school board members had admitted that public pressure against desegregation influenced their decisions. As a result, the court permanently enjoined the school district from the discrimination in assignment

³⁶ Minnesota Rule, Chapter 3535.0200, Subd. 4 (1990).

³⁷ Jon Powell, “Segregation and Educational Inadequacy in Twin Cities Public Schools” *Hamline Journal of Public Law & Policy* 17 (Spring, 1996) 337, 338.

³⁸ *Booker v. Special School District No.1*, 351 F. Supp. 799 (D. Minn. 1972).

³⁹ *Id.* at 803-804, 806, 809

of students and ordered the district to continue with its desegregation plan which the court determined had met constitutional requirements. The court only required the provision that no more than 35% of a school's enrollment can be minority.⁴⁰

In less than twenty years, the constrictive 35% rule of *Booker* was replaced by the buoyant 15% rule of the state. Within this circumstance, attaining a racial balance, as a legal construct, was not only illusory -- it was farcical.

Until then, the state paid the transportation cost, but in 1995 the state transferred the expense to school districts.⁴¹ Saddled with the soaring cost of busing students to schools that would inevitably become predominately minority, the district faced a Hobson's choice -- spend limited resources on either buses or books. In February, 1995, the district proposed that it be released from the State's guidelines for desegregation.⁴²

A growing number of families of color agreed feeling that busing had the consequence of isolating schools from parents and neighborhoods.⁴³ One black mother characterized her complaint by reporting that each morning her three sons rode three different buses to three different schools, all outside the borders of her neighborhood in south Minneapolis. The busing plan increasingly had made it difficult for parent involvement in the schools their children attended. They did not know their children's teachers and test scores had not improved. "It's ridiculous," the single mother at 29 and fulltime college student said. "We should have neighborhood schools."⁴⁴ A "concerned resident" from Minneapolis' black community took the

⁴⁰ *Id.*, at 810.

⁴¹ Minnesota Department of Education, "Program Finance/ Chronology of School Finance" (St. Paul, MN August 11, 2003), 7.

⁴² Forbes & Cunningham, 229; Minneapolis Public Schools, "Eliminating the Gap: Ensuring That all Students Learn," (Minneapolis, MN June 27, 1995), 4.

⁴³ Hennepin County Office of Planning & Development, "When Kids & Systems Collide: A Systemic Perspective on Learning Readiness Issues in Hennepin," (Minneapolis, MN., April, 1992) 25.

⁴⁴ Rob Hotakainen, "Community Schools movement prompts a clash of values," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, February 24, 1992, A1.

Forum on Public Policy

point further saying, “The issue for me isn’t sending them to school with other races, it’s dragging them all over town where they and their parents don’t know anyone.”⁴⁵

This view was similarly held in Detroit and Milwaukee. A decade earlier in Oklahoma City, black parents pressured the school board to discontinue the busing plan as early as 1984. To the consternation of the civil rights community and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, the school board agreed. In 1991, the Supreme Court concluded that a school board can be released from court-ordered busing and can even permit some resegregation as long as it had taken all “practicable steps” to eliminate the vestiges of past discrimination.⁴⁶ Locked within the racial demographic circumstances of Oklahoma City and Minneapolis where further intradistrict busing was not only pointless, but counterproductive, the Supreme Court seemed to accept that desegregation, confined within the borders of the city, had come to a veritable dead-end.

One year after *Dowell*, in *Freeman v. Pitts*, the Supreme Court held that courts may end supervision and control of school districts in incremental steps if student segregation is the result of independent demographic forces that are not traceable to constitutional violations which courts are powerless to remedy.⁴⁷ These two decisions reflected the position of the Rehnquist Court which opposed long-term judicial involvement. Orders entered in desegregation cases had never been intended to be permanent and common sense indicated that such orders should be dissolved after school districts had operated in compliance for a reasonable period of time.⁴⁸

Desegregation, in short, could be surrendered to white flight. Educators, acquiescing to the realities of racial fear and law, had school children to teach. If it could no longer be meaningfully enforced, then minority children comprising the majority of the student enrollment

⁴⁵ Suzanne P. Kelly, “Speaking of Desegregation,” *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, June 9, 1991, E-1.

⁴⁶ Board of Education of Oklahoma City v. Dowell, 498 U.S. 237, 249-251 (1991).

⁴⁷ *Freeman v. Pitts*, 503 U.S. 467 (1992).

⁴⁸ *Dowell*, 498 U.S. at 248-249.

Forum on Public Policy

of the district would have to be educated within virtual racial isolation. As a Minneapolis school district report stated, “The remedies of the past have not been sufficient to meet the needs of our students. Increasingly, families are calling on the schools to attack the problem of student achievement directly. It is time we did so.”⁴⁹

In 1991 Minneapolis’ black kindergarten through eighth grade children consistently scored the lowest in vocabulary, language mechanics, math computation, reading comprehension, language expression and math concepts. The district average of fifth, seventh and ninth graders fell by 2 to 5 percentage points in reading and writing skills, “hitting an all time low.” Black students suffered “the greatest decline.”⁵⁰

Fifteen years later, the achievement gap persisted. According to district records, for the 2005-2006 school year achievement gains were the lowest with black and American Indian students. Math scores in the city’s poorest schools were low across all racial groups. Indeed, math growth dropped in sixth grade for all groups of students of color. Interestingly, Somali students, many of whom still wrestled with learning English and adjusting to life in Minnesota’s largest city, improved in math at a faster rate than English-speaking African American students. In terms of reading scores, student performance increased significantly in 2006. As with math, the gains are lowest with black and American Indian students.⁵¹ These scores are worse than measures of achievement: they serve as indelible marks of stigma.

In conclusion, fifty-three years after “separate-but-equal” was deemed to be unconstitutional, the law and the community permitted a school system that educated children of color and white children in relative racial isolation and the school district could do nothing to

⁴⁹ “Eliminating the Gap,” 1.

⁵⁰ Rob Hotakainen, “Benchmark test passing rates fall, hitting all-time low,” *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, February 5, 1992, B-1.

⁵¹ Minneapolis Public Schools *2005-2006 District Achievement Report, Research, Evaluation & Assessment*. March, 2007.2, 9.

change this fact. Minneapolis is now confronted with choosing between maintaining a policy that further expends limited resources in the apparently futile effort to achieve racial balance or shift from this priority by diverting those resources to teaching the children who show up to school. Minneapolis, reluctantly, has chosen the later, and in some instances the results are hopeful. .

As bleak as the data were for 2005-2006, several high-poverty, racially-isolated schools were found to have beaten the odds by showing strong gains on standardized tests in math and literacy.⁵² The elements that the schools held in common were a relatively small student-teacher ratio, a capable and experienced principal and a cohesive partnership with the building's teachers, professional development for both teachers and principals, focused curriculum, parent engagement, continuous enrollment of students and high student attendance and corporate support. The challenge to the district rests in whether it is able to maintain the stability of these schools while spreading the promising formula of success to other schools. Only time will tell.

Nonetheless, the frustrating saga of school desegregation reflects a much more fundamental truth. The assumption of racial balance as a critical means to educational opportunity and therefore academic achievement has never been given a chance to succeed, to the detriment of society's most vulnerable children. Schools are a reflection of the conscience of society. What society values depict how well its institutions nurture all of its young which in turn become an investment in a vital and enlightened future. But as telling as they are, schools can not singularly transform society without the sustained and concerted will of society that truly values transformation. Simply put, if society wants better, it must do better. Otherwise, fear will trump reason leaving us with a future that is at once certain and insecure.

⁵² Id. at 8, 17.

Forum on Public Policy

References

- Chin, Richard. 1992. Minnesota lags U.S. in minority well-being. *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*.
- Draper, Norman. 1993. Twin Cities' core has worst poverty rate for minorities. *Minneapolis Star Tribune*.
- Forbes, Paula & James A. Cunningham. 1996. Desegregation & the Minneapolis Public Schools. *Hamline Journal of Public Law & Policy* 17:209-230.
- Franklin, John Hope. 1994. *From Slavery to Freedom: a History of African Americans* 7ed. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Frontline*. 1992. This Loan is Denied, produced by Corporation of Public Broadcasting, WGBH Education Foundation, Center of Investigative Researching, Inc., PBS video, videocassette.
- Hennepin County Office of Planning & Development. 1992. When Kids & Systems Collide: A Systemic Perspective on Learning Readiness Issues in Hennepin County..
- Hillson, Jon. 1977. *The Battle of Boston*. New York: Pathfinder Press.
- Hotakainen, Rob. 1992. Community Schools movement prompts a clash of value. *Minneapolis Star Tribune*.
- 1992. Benchmark test passing rates fall, hitting all-time low. *Minneapolis Star Tribune*.
- Jargowsky, Paul A. 1994. Ghetto Poverty Among Blacks in the 1980s. *Journal of Policy Analysis & Management* 12:288-306.
- Kelly, Suzanne P. 1991. Speaking of Desegregation. *Minneapolis Star Tribune*.
- Kluger, Richard. 1975. *Simple Justice* New York: Vintage 1975.
- Luckerman, Barbara & Michael Kane. 1994. Center for Urban and Regional Affairs: Land Use Practices: Exclusionary Zoning, DeFacto or DeJure? An Examination of the Practices of Ten Suburban Communities in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area.
- Massey, Douglas S. & Nancy A. Denton. 1993. *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Minneapolis City Planning Department. 1986. *Minneapolis Homeownership Survey*.
- 1993. *Minneapolis Homeownership Survey*.
- Minneapolis Public School. 1995. *School Site Services/ Health Related Services, Statement of Need*.
- 1995. *Eliminating the Gap: Ensuring that all Students Learn*.
- 2006. *Student Demographics*.
- 2007. *2005-2006 District Achievement Report, Research Evaluation & Assessment*.
- Minnesota Rule. 1990. Chapter 3535.0200, Subdivision 4.
- Minnesota Department of Education. 2003. *Program Finance/ Chronology of School Finance*.
- Minnesota Public Radio *Sunday Morning*. 2007.
- Morris, Arval A. 1980. *The Constitution & American Education*. St. Paul: West Publishing.
- Orfield, Myron. 1996. "Economic & Racial Polarization" *Journal of Public Law & Policy*. 17:271-298.
- 1997. *Metropolitica: A Regional Agenda for Community and Stability*, Stability Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.
- 1995. Memorandum to author.
- Powell, Jon. 1996. Segregation and Educational Inadequacy in Twin Cities Public Schools. *Hamline Journal of Public Law & Policy* 17:337-402.
- Ronnigen, Barbara J. 2006. *Immigrants in Minnesota*. St. Paul: State Demographic Center.
- Slidmore, Dave. 1992. Mortgage rejection rates higher for minorities. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*.
- United States Census. 1990. *Population and Housing*
- United Way. 1995. *Face of the Two Cities: Another Look, Trends Affecting Our Community Through 2000*. St. Paul: United Way.
- Urofsky, Melvin L. & Paul Finkelman. 2002 *A March of Liberty/ A Constitutional History of the United States* vol. II New York: Oxford University Press.
- von Sternberg, Bob. 1993. Moving Frenzy Suburbanites can't sit still. *Minneapolis Star Tribune*.

Cases

- Booker v. Special School District No.1, 351 F. Supp. 799 (D. Minn. 1972).
- Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).
- Board of Education of Oklahoma City v. Dowell, 498 U.S. 237, 245-246 (1991)

Forum on Public Policy

Columbus Board of Education v. Penick, 443 U.S. 449 (1979);
Dayton Board of Education v. Brinkman, 443 U.S. 526 (1979). .
Freeman v. Pitts, 503 U.S. 467 (1992)
Millikin v. Bradley, 418 U.S. 717, 752 (1974).
Pasadena City Board of Education v. Spangler, 427 U.S. 424, 436 (1976)
Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education, 402 U.S. 1, 27-29 (1971).

Published by the Forum on Public Policy

Copyright © The Forum on Public Policy. All Rights Reserved. 2006.