

# Segregation in Mississippi Public Schools in 2010?

## Federal Judge Orders Mississippi School District to End Policies

A federal judge in Mississippi has ordered a school district in the state to change school attendance policies that he said amount to [racial segregation](#).

The Justice Department had been investigating the Walthall County school district for several years, alleging what it called was a "flagrant violation" of a [desegregation](#) court order from 1970.

Federal District Judge Thomas Lee agreed with the Justice Department's claim that the school administration was transferring mostly white students out of district to a "racially identifiable white school," while the enrollment in their home district "has become [predominantly black](#)."

Prosecutors charged "that District annually permits over three hundred transfer students -- the vast majority of whom are white to attend Salem Attendance Center even though they reside in the Tylertown attendance zone."

"As a result of these transfers, Salem Attendance Center has allegedly become a [racially](#) identifiable white school while the student enrollment of the Tylertown schools has become predominately black," the judge wrote.

The district allegedly also "clustered" students in the individual schools, creating a "disproportionate numbers of white students into designated classrooms" at elementary schools in Tylertown, "resulting in significant numbers of segregated, all-black classrooms at each grade level."

Calls to Danny McCallum, the superintendent of education for Walthall County and Conrad Moore, the lawyer representing the county, were not returned today.

In November 2007, the Justice Department requested information from the school district to determine if it was in compliance with the 1970 desegregation order.

The Justice Department proposed a consent decree to remedy fixes to the school board's practices, but according to a Justice Department brief filed in the case, "on September 8, 2009, the Walthall County

School Board rejected the United States' consent decree without proposing an alternative solution or inviting further negotiation."

## Justice Department: Unacceptable to Encourage or Tolerate Resegregation

In a statement, Thomas Perez, the assistant attorney general in charge of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division said, "More than 55 years after Brown v. Board of Education, it is unacceptable for school districts to act in a way that encourages or tolerates the resegregation of public schools. We will take action so that school districts subject to federal desegregation orders comply with their obligation to eliminate vestiges of separate black and white schools."

Today's order by District Court Judge Tom S. Lee follows last week's notice by the school district, "that it does not intend to file a response to the United State's Motion for Further Relief."

The judge's order signed today calls for the policy to be reversed and for more oversight and specific guidelines under which student transfers must be



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approved.

Before the 2007 issue there had been other problems, noting how the district used duplicate bus routes to transport children. Going back to the late 1980s, records show that the school district spent about \$54,000 a year running duplicate bus routes to transfer children to different school districts.



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