

# Memorandum



Subject The Chicago School Board's Draft  
"Comprehensive Student Assignment Plan"  
filed December 31, 1981

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## A. Status

The Board is now holding public hearings on its draft and is scheduled to formally adopt the plan, with adjustments, on January 18, 1982. Bob Howard and others will be here on January 8 to receive our informal reaction to the plan (we must file our formal statement with the court on February 1, 1982). Mr. Howard wants a thumbs up or down decision from the Department on January 8 with respect to the plan's constitutionality and consistency with the Consent Decree. I told him we would try but that I could not assess what degree of finality our opinion would have. I have discussed with Mr. Howard the criticisms of the plan set out below; so he expects these issues to be raised at our meeting.

## B. Summary of the plan

The plan proposes to accomplish a relatively small degree of desegregation through voluntary student transfers. Mandatory busing is proposed as a "back-up" in 1983 but only under projected circumstances that are not likely to arise. Magnet schools (with special curricula) are to be continued and somewhat expanded in an attempt to attract white students to all-minority schools, but overall the Board concedes that it will have little success in desegregating the system's approximately 350 schools in this category. The main thrust of the plan is to desegregate and "stabilize" the remaining white schools by encouraging minority students to transfer in. \*/

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\*/ In a few instances black students have been reassigned mandatorily to white schools by boundary line adjustments, but the Board has given up on the idea of mandatory assignment of whites to black schools.

C. Desegregation accomplished through the present school year

As of October 31, 1981, the enrollment (excluding kindergarten) in the Chicago public schools was:

White	70,614
Black	245,061
Other Minority	86,999

The schools with white students enrolled ranged from a fractional percentage to over 70% white. Some were naturally integrated, but others were desegregated by voluntary transfers to the following extent:

	<u>Percentage of overall enrollment in magnet and voluntary programs which are integrated</u>		
	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Other Minorities</u>
(1) as of 1980-81	3.1	3.1	2.7
(2) added, fall 1981-82	<u>+1.0</u>	<u>+1.0</u>	<u>+1.3</u>
(3) Total	4.1	4.1	4.0

For whites, these figures mean the students participated in desegregated magnet schools; for minorities, the figures include those students in magnet schools and in white schools through voluntary transfers. Some of the "desegregated" black students were in magnet schools which were 15-29.9% white. The Board has used 30-70% white as a definition of a desegregated school. In 1981 there were 16,865 black students (or 5.7% of the total black enrollment) in schools which were 30% or more white. \*/

D. The Plan's projections of future desegregation

An appendix to the Board's plan contains past (from 1977) and projected (through 1985) enrollment statistics by race for each school in the system. The residential area in which each school is located is described in terms of anticipated racial change, if any, and the desegregative treatment, if any, for each school is set forth. I have summarized in Tables I and II the projected changes

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\*/ A few of which were over 70% white.

in enrollment at 125 schools which had over 30% white enrollment in 1981 and which are expected to become or remain desegregated under the Board's definition (at least 30% but no more than 70% white). These figures show that the Board projects that voluntary transfers and natural changes will place about 2,300 additional black students in these 125 schools in 1982 and add another 2,300 blacks over the three years ending with 1985. Thus, the Board plans to add about nine-tenths of one percent of the black enrollment to the white schools next year and the same amount over the following three years.

E. Limitations in the transfer of black students

There are two limitations on the ability of black students to transfer to formerly white schools. The first is the inclusion in the plan of a "majority-to-minority" transfer rule that disallows minority transfers if they would cause the enrollment of white children at the receiving school to fall below 50% (plan, p. 72). The second is the Board's unwillingness to allow substantial numbers of blacks to transfer to schools where the resident minority is composed of Hispanics and Asians. Both limitations are based on a claim that without them the stability of desegregation would be threatened.

The 50% rule is tempered somewhat by the plan's promise (p. 150) that in the future, on a year-to-year basis, the Board will examine whether the plan as a whole "is operating to provide, or to constrain, the opportunity of black students to transfer into desegregated schools." If constraint is found, the Board will reexamine "the application of [its] policies and the considerations of practicability . . . in individual schools to determine whether any constraint can be alleviated consistent with the overall objectives of the Plan."

An analysis of the school-by-school and overall projections of increased black enrollment (Tables I and II) show the effect of these limitations on black enrollment. For example, in District 1 (on the northwest side of the city) there are 29 elementary schools now between 52% and 76% white in which the Board projects a total increase of 193 black students next fall. The Board's staff analysis shows that no racial or ethnic residential change is expected in at least 17 of the zones serving these schools and where change is anticipated it is an increase in Hispanic or Asian residents. The Board has presented no data (empirical or otherwise) to show that the enrollment of substantial numbers of black students will threaten the "stability" of these schools.

F. The desire of black students to make voluntary Transfers

By ruling out mandatory transportation and any mandatory

assignment of white students to black schools \*/ as desegregation techniques, the Board has relied on voluntary transfers by black students almost entirely in exercising its duty under the Consent Decree to create the greatest practicable number of stably desegregated schools and to deal with the relatively severe isolation of black students. At present 5.7% of black students are in these schools and the plan proposes to increase this to 7.5% by 1985.

At our meeting of December 23, 1981, Mr. Howard informed us that a Board-commissioned public opinion survey determined that 22% of black parents wanted their children to make desegregative voluntary transfers. Assuming a maximum effort by the Board to inform black parents of their children's rights under this plan, there is obviously no match between what the Board proposes and what could be done. Thus, there is a clash of two "practicabilities" -- the Board's unsupported assertion that higher black enrollments would "destabilize" schools and the desire of black parents to have their students participate in an integrated education.

### Conclusion

I do not think the Plan is acceptable in its present form. We should seek modification of the 50% rule and the Board's unwillingness to assign black students in substantial numbers to schools where Hispanic and Asian students comprise the minority for statistical and definitional purposes. Further, the Board's meager projected changes are gradual, over a four-year period and no justification is provided for the delay.

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\*/ In many respects based on the Board's assertion that the white students would refuse to go.

TABLE I  
Board's Summary Statistics <sup>\*/</sup>

Category (based on 1981 Statistics	1981 #black (%black)	1982 Projections #black (%black)	1981 to 1982 Change #Black (%Black)
1) 34 schools which were over 70% white in 1981-82 (to be desegregated)	2,032 (12.3)	3,105 (19.0)	1,073
(proportion of all black students in these 34 schools)	( 0.8)	( 1.3)	( 0.5)
2) 40 schools which were between 30 and 69.9% white in 1981-82 (designated as "stably integrated")	4,009 (11.6)	4,444 (13.0)	435
(proportion of all black students in these 40 schools)	( 1.6)	( 1.9)	( 0.3)
3) 47 schools which have become less than 70% white this year or last	5,060 (22.3)	5,793 (26.0)	733
(proportion of all black students in these 47 schools)	( 2.1)	( 2.4)	( 0.3)
4) <u>Total</u> : 121 over-30% white schools where desegregative steps will be taken or where Board has decided that no more action is necessary	11,101 (15.0)	13,432 (18.3)	2,241
(proportion of all black students attending over-30% white schools)	( 4.5)	( 5.6)	( 1.1)

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\*/ There are 121 schools included here because 4 schools were omitted from the Board's summary printout.

TABLE II

Board Enrollment Projections for 125 Schools Which Were Over 30% White as of October 31, 1981 (43 are Designated as "Stably Integrated", 49 as "Already Desegregated" and 33 as "to be Desegregated")

I. Additional minority students to be added to these schools.

	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983 - 1985</u>
Black	2,300	2,300
Hispanic and Other Minorities	1,500	4,600

II. Projected white enrollment proportions.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Number of Schools</u>	
	<u>1982</u>	<u>1985</u>
Over 70% White	5	0
60-69% White	56	0
50-59% White	44	51
Under 50% White	20	74

III. Projected black enrollment proportions.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Number of Schools</u>	
	<u>1982</u>	<u>1985</u>
Over 30% Black	25	50
20-29% Black	33	27
10-19% Black	42	28
Under 10% Black	25	20