

**PRESS RELEASE**

Justice Department Secures Resolution in Madison County, Alabama, School Desegregation Case

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For Immediate Release

Office of Public Affairs

Court-Ordered Agreement Will Address Equal Access to Academic Programs and Non-Discrimination in Student Discipline

The Department of Justice has secured an agreement with the Madison County School Board to provide equal educational opportunities for Black students and pave the way for the district to fulfill its obligations in a longstanding school desegregation case. The consent order, approved today by U.S. District Court Judge Madeleine Hughes Haikala of the Northern District of Alabama, requires the school district to take action to provide equal access to gifted and talented services and other academic programs; ensure non-discrimination in student discipline; and improve practices for faculty recruitment, hiring, assignment and retention.

"It is long past time to deliver on the promises of *Brown v. Board of Education* for our nation's students," said Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division. "We are committed to ensuring that all students receive the educational opportunities they deserve across the Madison County School District. The Civil Rights Division will continue to fight on behalf of students in school districts that have not yet fulfilled their legal obligation to eliminate racial segregation 'root and branch.'"

This consent order will address findings from the Justice Department's most recent review of the district, including that Black students faced unnecessary barriers to participating in gifted and advanced programs, that they were subjected to exclusionary discipline at disparate rates when compared to their white peers, that Black high schoolers were more likely than their white peers to be referred for subjective infractions, and that the district's recruitment and hiring processes left several schools without a single Black faculty member. Under the terms of the consent order, the district will, among other requirements:

- Improve its gifted identification policies, training and practices; expand access to advanced placement and other advanced curricula; and identify and remove existing barriers for Black students;
- Engage a third-party consultant to conduct a comprehensive review of the district's discipline policies and procedures; revise the code of conduct; train staff on classroom behavior management; and collect and review discipline data to identify and address trends and concerns;
- Review faculty hiring, recruitment and retention practices to identify barriers for diverse applicants, improve recruitment and retention of Black teachers and administrators, and ensure their equitable assignment to schools;
- Appoint a district-level administrator to oversee implementation of the agreement and professional development for faculty, staff and administrators; and
- Work with a newly-constituted and diverse Desegregation Advisory Committee.

The order also requires regular reporting to the court, the Justice Department and private plaintiffs represented by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. The court will retain jurisdiction over the consent order during its implementation and the Justice Department will monitor the district's compliance.

The Civil Rights Division continues to prioritize enforcement of desegregation orders in school districts formerly segregated by law to ensure that all children can access the building blocks of educational success. Additional information about the Civil Rights Division is available on its website at www.justice.gov/crt, and additional information about the work of the Educational Opportunities Section is available at <https://www.justice.gov/crt/educational-opportunities-section>.

Members of the public may report possible civil rights violations at www.civilrights.justice.gov/.

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Madison County Consent Order [PDF, 143 KB]

Topic

CIVIL RIGHTS

Component

Civil Rights Division

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