

FACT SHEET

Topeka Public Schools  
(Unified School District No. 501  
Topeka, Kansas

October, 1973: Complaint received in Washington Office for Civil Rights in the form of a lawsuit entitled \_\_\_\_\_ alleging racial discrimination in the operation of the elementary and junior high school program of the Topeka U.S.D. #501.

November 6, 1973: Investigation initiated by meeting with Topeka Superintendent of Schools; discussing the nature and scope of the investigation (alleged discriminatory assignment of students and alleged lack of comparability of educational facilities and resources provided to minority and to non-minority students) and, requesting certain data relevant to the Title VI investigation.

November 26 through December 27, 1973: On-site field investigation conducted.

January 11, 1974: Letter of findings sent by Office for Civil Rights indicating non-compliance in that:

- (1) A substantial number of schools continue to operate with student racial compositions not consonant with a unitary plan of student assignment capable of fully desegregating the the district (vestiges of the dual system.)
- (2) Inter-attendance zone transfers of students serve to impede or retard the extent of desegregation otherwise possible in the district.
- (3) Most minority junior high school students in Topeka attend schools which are generally inferior in facilities to the junior high schools most non-minority students attend.
- (4) A significantly larger percentage of minority students as compared to non-minority students

attend elementary schools that have inadequate kindergarten rooms and relatively smaller library media centers. And,

requesting that the district submit a plan enumerating steps which will be taken in order to achieve compliance.

January 16, 1974: Letter of acknowledgment from the district and request for a "clarification meeting" for January 22, 1974.

January 28, 1974: Clarification meeting with district officials discussing findings and legal requirements for remedy.

February 8, 1974: Letter from the district enclosing a board adopted Resolution in response to the January 11, 1974 letter of findings and requesting specific clarification of the school facility findings in writing. The Resolution directed the administrative staff of U.S.D. No. 501 to "develop and implement a Plan for Expanding Educational Opportunity" in the district which would "work toward achieving a more perfect unitary school system" by use of one or more of the following means:

- (1) Reassignment of students to schools.
- (2) Redefining school attendance areas.
- (3) Closing certain schools and reassigning the students to other schools.
- (4) Remodeling schools.
- (5) New school construction.

The Resolution called for implementation at the beginning of the 1974/75 school year and periodic revision to assure that the goals be maintained at all times in the foreseeable future; provided, however that the Plan not substantially hinder the educational process or impair the health or safety of the students. The Resolution directed the Plan to be developed within 45 days and submitted to the Kansas City Office for Civil Rights Regional Director.

March 12, 1974: Letter to the district supporting the commitment and

direction of the Board Resolution and granting the requested extension of 45 days for the submission of the Plan to March 25, 1974. The letter also enclosed two informational documents; one which answered point by point the six specific questions posed by the district relative to the letter of findings, and another which provided detailed information on questions relating to the school facilities.

March 20, 1974: Letter from the district requesting an extension of time for the submission of a remedial plan not to exceed 60 days from March 24, 1974, and reaffirming the commitment for implementation at the beginning of the 1974/75 school year.

April 1, 1974: Letter to the district granting a 30 day extension for the submission of a plan to May 1, 1974.

May 1, 1974: Letter from the district which enclosed a copy of the tentative plan developed by the administrative staff and requested an extension from May 1, 1974, to June 1, 1974, for formal action by the School Board "in order to provide an opportunity for the community to be informed about the plan and to offer suggestions."

May 8, 1974: Letter from the district which enclosed a certified copy of a Resolution adopted by the Topeka Board of Education at their May 7, 1974, meeting which effectively rejected the adoption of the tentative plan to remedy the areas of non-compliance.