

Demographer queried in Brown case ^{Oct 11}

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An attorney for the Topeka school district began late Tuesday afternoon to challenge the credibility of William Lamson, a demographic analyst who testified in the reopened Brown case that Topeka's schools were racially lopsided.

Responding to questions by attorney Gary Sebelius, Lamson said he was a professional witness who provides demographic testimony for a fee of \$300 a day plus expenses.

Lamson also said he held no memberships in professional organizations.

Lamson, of Jackson, Miss., is the first witness called by the plaintiffs in the Brown case, which opened for rehearing Monday and is expected to last a month.

U.S. District Judge Richard Rogers agreed to hold the proceeding when a group of 17 Topeka school children and their parents petitioned the court in 1979, claiming that the Topeka schools never fully desegregated after the U.S. Supreme Court's 1955 decision.

The plaintiffs in this case are led by Linda Brown Smith, who also was the lead plaintiff in the original case, which overturned the separate-but-equal standard for segregated schools.

Lamson told the court that he had testified in several school desegregation cases and had even been approached by Topeka USD 501 in 1975 to provide demographic analysis of the district during an administrative proceeding initiated by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare to scrutinize racial imbalances in the schools.

Lamson said his quantitative analyses and professional testimony also had included such cases as one in which he testified on behalf of a man who wanted to prove during divorce proceedings that he was not a millionaire but only had credit.

Sebelius challenged Lamson's assertions in his testimony Monday and Tuesday during the first two days of the hearing that many Topeka schools were racially identifiable.

Lamson admitted that no Topeka school has an enrollment within lim-

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the United Way

FAMILY SERVICE AND GUIDANCE CENTER
OF TOPEKA, INC.

\$200,121 (Recommended allocation)

Day care for children experiencing serious social, emotional or behavioral problems, as well as mental health services for area youth and their families are only two of the important services provided by the Family Service and Guidance Center of Topeka.

Evaluations and therapy are extended to families and children in need, and subprograms also provide needed assistance to victims of child abuse.

Program for 3- to 5-year-olds focuses not only on care for

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its proscribed by Lamson's own "rule of thumb" for determining racial identifiability of schools. Applied against that rule, none of Topeka's schools has a black enrollment more than 15 percent above or below the districtwide black enrollment.

Sebelius noted during his questioning of Lamson that Lamson did not examine minorities other than blacks and that he did not form conclusions about the influence of historically black settlements in Topeka upon enrollments at Topeka schools.

Lamson admitted that there were no "vestiges" of segregation in Topeka high schools.

However, in a school-by-school ex-

portionately black schools," Lamson said. "But adjustments are not going on between and among disproportionately black and disproportionately white schools."

In testimony about the drawing of boundaries for the junior highs or middle schools and the high schools, Lamson suggested that a greater degree of racial equality could be achieved by drawing boundary areas in a horizontal fashion, "where east-side boundaries reach into the west-side," than maintaining them as generally north-south areas.

Lamson was particularly critical of the opening of Topeka West High School in 1961, which he described as the creation of "an all-white high school." In 1980, Topeka West had a black enrollment of 4.1 percent, compared with 51.5 percent and 44.4

percent at Highland Park High School and Topeka High School.

Lamson said that in the years since the Brown mandate, the district also built additions to white schools and deployed portable classrooms at white schools to accommodate overflow at white schools rather than to reassign white students to "black schools."

Lamson called the practice "an exclusively white phenomenon" and said that at Topeka West High School "it guaranteed space available if you wanted to move into the Topeka West area."

The school district missed opportunities to enhance the racial mix at schools when it did not adopt Plan N and Plan X, two proposals reviewed in 1984 that would have redrawn school boundaries.