



E-MAIL | JS ONLINE | TMJ4 | WTMJ | WTKI | CNI |
LAKE COUNTRY



[Journal Sentinel Services](#) [Classifieds](#) [OnWisconsin LIVE](#) [Coupons](#) [Yellow](#)

Online Bachelor's & Master's Degrees for Working Professionals

[Accounting](#)
 [Business](#)

[Education](#)
 [Information Technology](#)

[Management](#)
 [Nursing](#)

News Articles:
Advanced Searches

Search



**Subscribe to the
Milwaukee Journal
Sentinel Online**

[JS Online Features](#)



[ON WISCONSIN](#) : [JS ONLINE](#) : [NEWS](#) : [MILWAUKEE](#) :

[E-MAIL](#) | [PRINT](#)
THIS STORY

[Shop the
lighting](#)

[News](#)
[Wisconsin](#)
[Milwaukee](#)
[Waukesha](#)
[Oz/Wash](#)
[Racine](#)
[Editorials](#)
[Columnists](#)
[Obituaries](#)
[Letter to Editor](#)
[Weather](#)
[AP The Wire](#)

Special Features:

2002
year in review

Chronic
Wasting
Disease

SPECIAL SECTION
MILWAUKEE'S
FUTURE

CAUCUS
investigation
click here

War on
Terrorism
CLICK HERE

PHOTO
OF THE
DAY

Take
5
A DAILY Q&A

State's schools called segregated

Report also notes jump in MPS black-white ratio

By SARAH CARR
scarr@journalsentinel.com

Last Updated: Jan. 22, 2003

A new report that concludes that "apartheid schools" are emerging throughout the country indicates that Wisconsin is one of the 10 most segregated states for black students.

The report did not rank segregation in cities in a similar fashion. But it did show that Milwaukee posted the second-largest jump in the percentage of black students in the district over the last 20 years. The report was released this week by Harvard University's Civil Rights Project.

Over the same period, the city has seen the third-biggest drop in the percentage of white students in the district compared with other cities.

In this category, researchers compared Milwaukee with the 25 largest "central city districts," or ones in urban areas where the school district includes only the city, not the entire county.

"One of our recommendations is for cities to look at combining the city and the suburbs into one school system so that it will draw from multiple groups of people," said Erica Frankenberg, a research assistant at the Civil Rights Project.

By The Numbers

Change in percentage of Milwaukee school district enrollment:

1967-2000

- White: down 54 percentage points
- Black: up 37 percentage points

1980-2000

- White: down 26 percentage points
- Black: up 15 percentage points

Archived Coverage

- Segregation: A More Integrated Milwaukee (3-part series)

Archived Features:

Need Help?

[Searching Archives](#)
[Wireless Access](#)
[Site Topics](#)
[Table of Contents](#)
[Contact Staff](#)
[Subscriptions](#)

She added that the highest levels of segregation were found in central-city districts throughout the country, pointing out that some districts are more integrated largely because the suburbs and city are included in the same district.

"While the decline in white enrollment in Milwaukee is bigger than in many other cities, it is definitely not an aberration," Frankenberg said.

In the 1970s, an idea surfaced in Milwaukee to join the city and suburbs and divide them up into pie-shaped slices, said Aquine Jackson, Milwaukee Public Schools' director of neighborhood schools. It was called the Conta Plan, after its sponsor, then-state Rep. Dennis Conta, but it did not get enough support to pass in the Legislature.

Later lawmakers passed the Chapter 220 integration plan, which provides state payments to support Milwaukee minority students transferring into suburban districts, and white students from suburban districts transferring into Milwaukee Public Schools.

But Jackson added that since the 1970s, no one has brought forth a serious proposal to merge city and suburban districts.

 "I think it is political," he said. "The school boards would have to agree on it or the state would have to mandate it."

Averaging 'exposure index'

The Harvard study used National Center for Education Statistics data from 2000 and prior years and relied on what is called an "exposure index" to calculate segregation levels. The exposure index considers the "exposure" of different racial groups to each other and relies on broad averages, looking, for instance, at the percentage of white students in the school of the "average" black student in a state. If the Latino-white exposure index in a state were 29%, it would mean the average Latino student attended a school composed of 29% whites.

Howard Fuller, an outspoken advocate for vouchers and former MPS superintendent, said he thinks there is little new information in the report. He also said the idea of valuing exposure raises the specter of the so-called tipping point issue.

"What percentage of black people is too many before it 'tips' and you can no longer consider the school integrated?" he asked. "The question is what percent of black people to white people is OK? When are there too many of us?"

But Gary Orfield, one of the authors of the study, said the researchers do not set any ideal standard of integration, but instead are reporting the experience of the average student in specific geographic areas. "We are just trying to describe the average experience of racial

[Jobs](#)
[Cars](#)
[Real Est](#)
[Rentals](#)
[Persona](#)
[General](#)
[Grocery](#)
[Buy & S](#)
[Contests](#)

groups," he said, adding, "I personally do not believe there is a tipping point, but a continuum."

Wisconsin had the 10th lowest percentage of blacks in majority white schools and eighth highest percentage of blacks in 90% to 100% minority schools, according to the report. Similar statistics released by the Civil Rights Project in July 2001 ranked Wisconsin as the 11th most segregated state in each of those two categories.

The new study listed New York, Michigan, Illinois and Maryland among the top five states in both measures of segregation. As is the case in other segregation indexes, states with small black populations tended not to rank high.

The study does not list cities in terms of segregation, but instead looks at broader demographic shifts in the largest cities and suburbs. It shows the percentage of white students in MPS dropping from 45% in 1980 to 19% in 2000 and the percentage of blacks climbing from 46% to 61%, one of the more dramatic changes of any city.

Experts and MPS officials cite a few different causes.

"Milwaukee is unusual mainly in the fact that very few African-American families have been moving to the suburbs - the white families are moving, but the black ones are not," said John Logan, director of the University at Albany's Lewis Mumford Center for Comparative Urban and Regional Research, which released a report last year on school segregation.

Logan, like the authors of the Harvard study, attributes the numbers nationally not only to the movement of white families to the suburbs, but also to the end of court-ordered desegregation of the schools in numerous cities.

Jackson said the desegregation order ceased to have any direct effect in Milwaukee as of 1983, but the school board has its own diversity goals, namely that 30% to 70% of the students in each school are black.

During the 2001-'02 school year, 27% of MPS schools met that goal.

But he did concede that the push toward neighborhood schools in the district has had some impact on the numbers.

"The neighborhood schools will reflect our neighborhoods," he said. "And if the neighborhoods are racially identifiable, then there is a high likelihood that our schools will be racially identifiable."

A version of this story appeared in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel on Jan. 23, 2003.

[BACK TO TOP](#)

[News Articles:](#)
[Advanced Searches](#)

[Search](#)



[Subscribe to the
newspaper or
order online](#)

[JS Online Features](#)

© Copyright 2003, Journal Sentinel Inc. All rights reserved.
Produced by [Journal Interactive](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

Journal Sentinel Inc. is a subsidiary of [Journal Communications](#), an employee-owned company.
v050802a