



NEWS RELEASE

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CONSENT DECREE STATUS HEARING TRACKS PROGRESS

Judge Joe Billy McDade listened to joint statements from attorneys for African American Plaintiffs and for the Champaign Community Unit School District #4 in a status conference regarding the Consent Decree signed by the parties in 2002 in an effort to improve educational outcomes for African American students. The Consent Decree is set to expire June 30, 2009.

Judge McDade had stated that the status conference would be in closed chambers, as requested by Plaintiffs, at the federal district court in Peoria at 1 p.m. yesterday. At the start of the status conference, the Judge decided to open the hearing to the public. The District and Plaintiff's attorneys presented an agreed statement of positive progress under the Consent Decree. Agreed upon areas of success include:

- academic achievement. Improvements in student achievement were noted at the elementary and middle schools for African American students and for all students.
- Curriculum. The District has reorganized the curriculum department, including development of written and aligned curriculum for all grades, development of a district-wide grading policy and implementation of common assessment for all grades.
- Controlled Choice. A greater degree of racial balance has been achieved in Unit 4 schools, and over 95 percent of kindergarten families receive their first, second or third choice school through the Choice lottery.
- data production. The District has greatly increased its capacity in technology to produce data relevant to improving academic outcomes.
- hiring and staffing. The District is hiring African American administrators, teachers and staff in accordance with the available labor market.

Each side presented its view of progress or lack of progress under the Consent Decree. Both sides agreed that accelerated progress toward Consent Decree goals for African American students at the high school level is expected during the final year of the Consent Decree. High school students' achievement, discipline and attendance and over-representation of African American students in special education at all levels were all cited as areas where accelerated progress is necessary to improve academic outcomes for African American students.

Judge McDade, Court Monitor Robert Peterkin and Plaintiff's Attorney Carol Ashley acknowledged the work of the Board and Administration toward meeting Consent Decree goals. Judge McDade spoke directly to Superintendent Arthur Culver and acknowledged his leadership in the Consent Decree progress and challenged him to accelerate progress during the final year of the Decree.

"I appreciate the recognition of the hard work of the Board and administration, but our successes would not have been possible without exemplary teachers and support staff who are committed to the success of every child. Meeting the goals of the Consent Decree is daunting, but our staff has embraced the challenge. We understand that we have a great

deal of hard work ahead of us, but our success keeps us motivated. We know that the programs, policies, and practices implemented because of the Consent Decree benefit all of our students,” said Superintendent Culver