

DESEGREGATION FUNDS IN PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS: WHY FUNDING BASED ON
DIVERSITY IS STILL CRUCIAL FOR MODERN DAY PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN ARIZONA

By

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Abstract

In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled that schools could no longer separate students based on ethnicity. Separate but equal could no longer be the standard, and schools were required to integrate. 60 years later, there are still school districts that are under court-order to fund programs that foster diversity. The money used to pay for these programs are called desegregation funds. In Arizona, desegregation funds are a point of contention. There is a bill making its way through the Arizona legislature that, if passed, will phase out desegregation funds over the next ten years. In this thesis, I begin with a brief history of racial inequality within education and continue with an explanation of how Arizona's desegregation funds are distributed and the controversy surrounding them. The thesis concludes with a personal analysis of the current state of Arizona's funding issues.

Introduction

Under the Title VI Civil Rights Act of 1964, any program that received federal funding from the United States Department of Education was prohibited from discriminating against any person based on color, race, or national origin. While the intentions of Title VI were to prevent discrimination against students and ensure that children of all backgrounds have access to a meaningful education, executing these changes was a slow process for most school districts. So slow, in fact, that over 50 years later, school districts are still being investigated and punished over the mistreatment of students of color. One of these districts is the Tucson Unified School District in Tucson, Arizona. Arizona's public education system has been failing its students for many years, and especially so when it comes to non-Anglo students. The United States is still saturated with racial and social inequality in practically every institution that deals directly or indirectly with its citizens; the education system is no different.

The U.S. Department of Education developed a process of investigating school districts after plaintiffs would come forward with complaints of injustice regarding school segregation and integration. School districts were required to address these complaints if they were found to have merit, and the funds with which changes were made were referred to as desegregation funds. In some school districts, including some in Arizona, desegregation funds are still an active piece of the government's budget for education spending, even if there are no active investigations or complaints against a district. For Arizona, this is a controversial issue. Proponents of desegregation funding argue that it benefits students of color and low-income students, but opponents argue that the funding is unfair to the districts that do not receive extra money based on the desegregation programs. There are many issues that have arisen in Arizona regarding its education budget and spending practices in the last few years. Desegregation

funding presents a challenge for the state since there are even broader monetary problems within the state budget for education.

In this thesis, I will argue that desegregation funds are a necessary stepping stone in the fight for equality in education for students of color and low-income, less privileged students. To make this argument, I will start by providing information regarding the history of the United States' education policies in conjunction with racial inequality. I will discuss racially-charged disparities and how these came to be, as well as what they look like now in America, overall. I will continue with a brief history of desegregation in the United States and this will be followed by a deeper explanation of Arizona's history with desegregation funding and its current state regarding public education issues. Once I have given a full background on the issue of desegregation and education, I will discuss the current debate in Arizona surrounding the continuation of desegregation funds. I will present the arguments of both the pro-funding side and the anti-funding side. I will proceed by making my own argument regarding the issue, and I will defend my stance that desegregation funds are necessary. I will continue by proposing my own ideas on how to potentially remedy the situation regarding desegregation funding. I will conclude with a summary of the thesis as a whole.

This thesis topic is relevant for several reasons. The first is that I am from Tucson, Arizona, and the issues with the state's educational system have always been topics of discussion within my family as I grew up. After graduation, I will be continuing on to get my Masters in Public Administration in order to pursue a career working in public education reform. Regardless of one's political stance or what side someone takes on the matter of desegregation funds, it has become abundantly clear from recent research that the United States has fallen behind in comparison to other countries when it comes to the ability to properly educate and prepare

students for success. In 2013, in an international ranking of OECD countries (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development), the U.S. scored below average in math and average in science and reading, despite spending the 5th most amount of money per student (Ryan, 2013). However, Arizona ranks third to last in spending per student throughout the country (Brown, 2016). It is important to note here, as well, that socio-economic factors play a much bigger role in the education of students in the U.S. than in other OECD countries (Ryan, 2013). This is an important bit of information because this thesis focuses on how socio-economic variation impacts education, as well as how race plays a role in the equality of opportunity for all students. Arizona is an unfortunate example of a failing education system that greatly needs reform. The ongoing debate about the desegregation funding in Arizona is a window into the funding issues that Arizona has been grappling with for years, which I will cover in depth later in the thesis. Being from Tucson, I have witnessed firsthand how students have been negatively affected by Arizona's public school system, especially minority students. In recent years, Tucson Unified School District developed the Mexican American Studies program, which helped incorporate the history of Latinos into traditional history classes. Tucson has a large Latino population and this new program was meant to expand student knowledge about non-Anglo communities. However, the MAS program was swiftly banned by the state government for its supposed potential to cause students to band together based on their ethnicity, which could in turn, hurt the school district overall. Students of different ethnic backgrounds, even in my hometown of Tucson, are being discriminated against. This thesis seeks to provide a general explanation of discrimination and education in the United States before turning its focus on Arizona; it will target the controversy of desegregation funds as an example of the way race and education intersect in our school districts.

A Brief History of Race and Education

In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled that schools could no longer segregate students based on race under the claim that these schools were separate but equal. The case of *Brown v. Board of Education* was a landmark ruling. It created a sense of hope for black and other minority students that they would soon have access to the same education that their white peers had benefitted from for decades. Jim Crow laws put into place by the states had allowed the segregation of black and white students on the basis of skin color, leading to a massive gap in education between the two races. White schools had more money, better resources, and a greater ability to educate the White students that attended them. This was not the case for most black students. While white students enjoyed the privileges of their skin color, black students “faced the reality of worn books and long walks to school in treacherous conditions on a daily basis” (Aiken, 2013, p.35). While the ruling of *Brown v. Board* seemed promising in theory, the execution of it was slow and difficult. Most of the schools that were closed as a result of desegregation were black schools. States and school boards created loop holes and voucher programs to help white families avoid the predominantly black schools that still remained open, which were few and far between (Aiken, 2013, p.37-38). Black schools employed black teachers and white schools employed white teachers, leading to huge job losses for black teachers- it was nearly impossible for them to get hired after the schools they taught at were closed (Aiken, 2013, p.38). As Aiken (2013) writes, “these massive layoffs threatened the economic, social, emotional, and academic success of black children, then and now” (p.38).

The phenomenon of “white flight” appeared during the late 1950s due to desegregation. White families would send their children to private schools or up and move to white suburbs to ensure their children would not be in a school with minority children. In fact, parents would often move back to the city once their children were no longer of school age, citing convenience (Wolters, 2008, p.228). In 1965, a full decade after *Brown v. Board*, “almost 94% of Southern black students remained in all black schools” (Aiken, 2013, p.37). Busing was the court’s response to the lack of desegregation taking place. Sociologist James S. Coleman reported from his research that “court-ordered busing fostered ‘resegregation’ by increasing the incidence of white flight” (Wolters, 2008, p.229). Even in certain states’ attempts to foster integration through the practice of busing, it was not working because whites were leaving; according to Coleman, the more black students that enrolled in a school, a higher number of white students would enroll elsewhere (Wolters, 2008, p.229). Wolters (2008) summarizes the white flight and busing issue saying “there would be no racially balanced integration without court-ordered busing, but such busing had the overall effect of defeating integration” (p.229). Coleman suggested that an open-enrollment plan might be more effective, with the incentive being that integrated schools would be given a 50% larger budget than non-integrated schools, foreshadowing the desegregation funding that states are grappling with today.

It is important to distinguish between desegregation and integration. *Brown v. Board* concluded that segregation was unconstitutional, and desegregation was to take place. However, desegregation does not equal integration. Though schools were being desegregated, they were not integrating (Aiken, 2013, p.37). Aiken (2013) powerfully notes that “desegregation without integration is just a mere mixing of bodies” (p.37). Desegregation without integration ignores differences in culture, class, race, and student experience. Black students were dropped into

predominantly white classrooms with students and teachers that had very few shared experiences with them. Coleman believed that contact between people of equal status was necessary to achieve better relations; desegregation alone was problematic because “it mixed lower-class blacks with middle-class whites at a time when there was a substantial difference in the customs and in the average academic achievement of the two groups” (Wolters, 2008, p.231). The idea behind integration was that black students that had been subjected to poor education so far could benefit from being surrounded by white students that had grown up in very different circumstances with better educational opportunities. White students could potentially grow as people through learning about the struggles of their new black peers, but oftentimes, the justification of integration in regards to white students was just that they would not be worse off.

However, the results when desegregation was in full swing were not what had been hoped for at the time of *Brown v. Board*. The differences in the backgrounds of white and black students were quickly apparent, and as Aiken (2013) notes, “cultural incongruence can lead to cultural conflict” (p.39). The lack of attention to the special needs of black students and their experiences resulted in black students falling behind white students in standardized test scores (Wolters, 2008, p.234). There was a heightened racial consciousness of black students, and white students became more negative toward their black peers (Wolters, 2008, p.234). Black students were expelled and suspended at a much higher rate than white students which impacted their total time in school and classes (Aiken, 2013, p.39). The feeling of inferiority that had been ingrained in black children by society since their birth became even heavier after desegregation. There was a pervasive sentiment that black students just could not succeed in school the way white students did; they were inherently less capable. “Before they were given a chance to prove themselves, they were expected to fail,” in this new school setting (Aiken, 2013, p.40). At the

very least before desegregation, there was a strong black community to watch out for its own children, raised by their own and taught by their own (Aiken, 2013, p.40). This was dismantled with Brown v. Board and the closing of so many black schools. The lack of similar culture, experiences, and values caused tension between black and white students instead of fostering a new school community (Aiken, 2013, p.39). Martin Luther King Jr. “predicted that we were integrating into a burning house” (Aiken, 2013, p.40). Black students were taking the brunt of the damage.

Race and Education Relations in 2016

The segregation and racial tensions of the past have translated into structural racism and inequality within the institution of education today. Black and other minority students are still at a heavy disadvantage compared to their white peers. Educational expectations are lower for black children according to Child Trends, a non-profit and non-partisan research center that tracks data about children (Cook, 2015). The sentiment of inferiority that black students may be predisposed to as a result of their circumstances can result in self-fulfilling prophecies. Students have less positive attitudes toward school, fewer out-of-school learning opportunities, as well as less parent-child communication about school (Cook, 2015). Lindsey Cook (2015) of the U.S. News and World Report explains how black children are more likely to be enrolled in low-quality daycare at a young age, while white children have higher rates of being read to, told stories, do arts and crafts, etc. These traditions greatly affect the trajectory of students’ careers as they enter formal schooling. White students have higher test scores in reading, math, and science when entering kindergarten, and this gap persists throughout their schooling (Cook, 2015). Black

students are three times more likely to be held back even though there has been research that debunks the effectiveness of keeping students back a grade in school; this research also suggests that it makes them more likely to drop out later (Cook, 2015).

This gap between white and black students not only exists, but is perpetuated and continued with each generation of new students. Black students face dynamic forces, which Aiken (2013) defines as a force “beyond the control of students that has a significant influence on their lives” (p.41). These dynamic forces include things like poverty, homelessness, abuse, neglect, and a lack of positive role models. Before students even arrive at school, they may experience many of these dynamic forces, and when they do get there, they are expected to excel in class, stay focused throughout the day, and succeed just as their white peers do, though white students are less likely to be subjected to the same forces. Aiken (2013) states that “without first addressing these issues, it is nearly impossible to expect students to perform at their maximum achievement level” (p.41). Multiple schools still exist today that are essentially segregated with populations that are made up of almost 100 percent Black students. When a significant number of these students are fighting the obstacles that Aiken addresses, schools become overwhelmed and unable to correctly and properly address their students’ needs.

The United States is a member of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, or the OECD. Of all OECD countries, the U.S. spends the most money per pupil. However, this has not necessarily translated to better results in comparison with the other countries (Cook, 2015), especially for minority students. There is a gaping difference in educational success between students of color and white students (Cook, 2015). On average, schools with higher minority populations have less experienced, lower paid teachers that are less likely to be certified; a report from the Center for American Progress concluded that a 10

percentage point rise in students of color at a school is associated with a decrease in per-pupil spending of \$75 (Cook, 2015). Desegregation was court –ordered over 60 years ago, yet dozens of school districts throughout the United States have current desegregation orders against them, including Tucson Unified School District and until recently, Phoenix Union School District in Arizona. In Cook’s article, she addresses the same type of dynamic forces that Aiken puts forth as reasons for the gap in education- black children are more likely to have emotionally traumatic experiences that impact childhood such as abuse, neglect, death of a parent, or witnessing domestic violence- all of which can seriously influence a child’s ability to concentrate in school (Cook, 2015). Statistically “these factors are associated with a plethora of other problems: lower math and reading achievement, behavioral problems, grade retention, obesity, risky sexual behavior, greater risk of illness, and greater risk of interpersonal or self-directed violence” (Cook, 2015). Just like in the 1960s, black children are more suspended and expelled at three times the rate of their white peers, as well as being arrested, and referred to law enforcement on a higher scale (Cook, 2015). They are predisposed to behavioral issues, and these issues are not addressed within a school setting. Black students are then punished for behavior that they have never had any help with correcting.

Many people assume that poverty is the reason for gaps in funding for public schools. However, it is not just poverty that plays a role, but race, as well. David Mosenkis, a data analyst, found in his research that poverty alone does not explain underfunding (White, 2015). Schools with a lot of minority students are chronically underfunded. Mosenkis researched funding data of 500 school districts in the state of Pennsylvania. The idea was that richer school districts should be able to “drum up more cash through taxes” and therefore, receive less in funding (White, 2015). Vice versa, poorer school districts should receive more in funding.

Mosenkis found that districts that have a higher proportion of white students got substantially more funding than districts that have more minority students; these funding gaps exist based solely on a school's racial composition, wealth aside (White, 2015). A district's funding level would decrease if the presence of minority students would increase.

White (2015) gives a description of Pennsylvania that greatly echoes Arizona's educational situation: "the state's former governor stripped the education budget significantly. In the years since, schools have shuttered, teachers have been fired, and the schools that remain are existing on bare-bones budgets." Though Pennsylvania has voted to adopt a new formula for the distribution of funds, it "would potentially split new funding increases more equitably, but they would still build off the existing, biased funding base for each district- virtually guaranteeing that some level of bias persists" (White, 2015). State governments, such as Arizona, are dealing with similar issues throughout the country. The continuing issue of white flight has left minority students with underfunded schools that have little money and few resources with which to educate their students. White (2015) states that a major, disheartening difference between the state of race relations in the 1960s compared to today is that there used to be purposeful attempts at integrated schools that are non-existent today. Changes that would unintentionally result in greater diversity such as redistricting are "often passionately rejected by the inhabitants of richer, whiter districts" (White, 2015).

Arizona's Educational Gap

While school districts and states throughout the country are dealing with similar issues regarding race, income, and education, some are handling it better than others. Statistically,

Arizona is failing its students. Most states provide less support per student than before the recession hit eight years ago, and though the economy has been steadily improving in recent years, certain states are still cutting their education funding (Leachman, 2016). Arizona is one of twelve states that have imposed new cuts, even though most states have raised their general funding per student; while cutting the education budget, Arizona has also cut income taxes that could be used to prop it up (Leachman, 2016). David Sciarra, executive director of the Education Law Center in New Jersey, and co-author of a recent national study on general school funding, concluded that “Arizona fails on almost every measure of fairness or equity or access,” and that the state “provide[s] very little, almost no increase in funding to districts with the most concentrated student need” (Ortega, 2011).

Part of Arizona’s education budget that has been called into question in recent years is desegregation funding. Desegregation funding is a response to school districts that do not meet the U.S. Department of Education’s requirement for school diversity. When plaintiffs from a school or school district lodge a complaint against a district, that district is investigated by the U.S. DOE. If they conclude that the school district has not done enough to ensure desegregation and integration, a court-order is placed on that district, forcing the governing body to develop a plan to address and solve these issues. The funds used to pay for these programs are called desegregation funds. Once the court determines that a district has properly addressed the issues at hand, they are granted “unitary status” and the order is lifted. In certain states, including Arizona, there are districts that have been investigated and granted unitary status but are still levying these desegregation funds to continue to pay for desegregation services such as cross-town busing or special retention programs. Desegregation funds in Arizona are paid for by the school districts being allowed to collect extra money from property taxes.

In 1979, the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights began an investigation into the Phoenix Union High School District (Cano, 2016). The plaintiffs alleged that the district was engaging in practices that had led to poor and minority students attending overcrowded schools; in 1984, the Office for Civil Rights validated these claims and a court-order allowed for the creation of desegregation funds to address the issues (Cano, 2016). Phoenix Union was granted "unitary status" in 2005 (Cano, 2016). Four years later, Tucson Unified School District was granted unitary status, as well, only to have it revoked in 2011 after courts determined that it was not fulfilling its obligations to students (Cano, 2016). This year, Republican Arizona Senator Debbie Lesko introduced legislation that will phase out desegregation funding over the next ten years from all districts that have reached unitary status (TUSD will be included once it does so); at this point, 18 schools are levying \$211 million per year (Cano, 2016).

Proponents of the bill argue that the desegregation funding is unfair to other districts that could also use extra funding, and the desegregation money gives the districts using it an advantage. Opponents of the bill say that the desegregation funding is necessary for low-income schools to better educate and prepare their students and that without it, they would struggle to do so. However, Arizona's education budget has even bigger issues than just the desegregation funds. According to David Safier (2015) of the Tucson Weekly, "Arizona legislature is purposefully and knowingly starving schools and school districts." The budget is stretched so thin that "whenever a district decides to put money in one place, it's like stealing food from one child and putting it in another child's mouth," and that while it is understandable to interpret desegregation funds as prioritizing certain students over others, the main issue is that there is not enough money being given to schools in general (Safier, 2015). In 2015, officials proposed a

plan that would add new grades to five Tucson schools: Borman, Collier, Drachman, Fruchthendler, and Sabino; this plan would cost TUSD about 1.5 million dollars (Safier, 2015). How does this affect the argument surrounding desegregation funds? All 5 of the schools proposed in the plan serve the district's Anglo community, which "creates another battlefield for the district and the desegregation plaintiffs to fight on" (Safier, 2015). The district also proposed adding a bus to bring non-Anglo students to the expanding schools, but as Safier (2015) notes, "that sounds like an attempt to put a deseg ribbon on what is basically an Anglo-centered package." While proponents of the bill to phase out desegregation funding argue that the programs funded by the money that serve the minority student communities in Arizona are no longer needed, districts such as TUSD are still proposing plans that ignore the Latino and low-income students that need the funding the most. The state still owes TUSD \$330 million dollars that was illegally withheld from the district; but even with those funds, Arizona would still be at or near the lowest amount of money spent per pupil in the nation (Safier, 2015). Even if the money was restored to the district that deserves it, the low-income and minority students that are still at a disadvantage will remain there.

Proponents of phasing out desegregation funding also believe that the funds are being misused as they stand currently. Another bill, SB1120, has been introduced that calls for an audit of desegregation funding before it can be spent; it also charges the school districts for the cost of analysis (Huicochea, 2015a). The bill mainly targets Phoenix Union and Tucson Unified because they spend about \$15 million in desegregation funds each year. While desegregation funds were originally spent at the discretion of the district governing board, they are now scrutinized and reviewed at the highest level, according to TUSD Superintendent H.T. Sanchez (Huicochea, 2015a). Plaintiffs in the original desegregation case agree with the bill in the sense that they want

more transparency about the spending, but Sylvia Campoy, a representative for the Latino plaintiffs, believes that the motivation behind the bill is wrong (Huicochea, 2015a). Campoy says that the state representatives backing SB1120 are “trying to kill critical components of education, if not public education altogether,” and that forcing districts to foot the bill for the audit proves insensitivity about money taken from direct services to students (Huicochea, 2015a).

Representatives of the school districts that would be the most affected by the removal of desegregation funds have come forward in response to the original bill. Christine Busch, superintendent of the Tempe Elementary School District, described how in the 60s and 70s, Arizona had high and low-level socioeconomic schools with different and inadequate services for students in the low-socioeconomic schools (Irish, 2016). She says that schools were racially isolated; low-income schools did not have nurses, librarians, or the same educational services that the more affluent schools had (Irish, 2016). English language learning, or ELL students, were disproportionately assigned to special education classes, and minority staff tended to be hired only at minority-heavy schools (Irish, 2016). The gap between the education of low-income and minority students in the 60s and 70s did not steadily close or disappear; on the contrary, it exists today just as much as it did 50 years ago. This is why Busch argues that the school districts are still in need of desegregation funding. According to the superintendent, desegregation funding helps districts provide all students access to equal educational opportunities (Irish, 2016). Without desegregation funding, Tempe Elementary would lose 257 teaching positions, full-day kindergarten, possibly have to close schools and reduce social workers in a district where 83% of students are minorities and 73% receive free or reduced price lunches (Irish, 2016). Superintendent of Phoenix Union School District, Chad Gestson reports that graduation rates have increased in his district from 55% from 15 years ago to 80% today and

that the dropout rate has been reduced to 3.4% from 15% 20 years ago- and credits desegregation funds for fueling the change (Irish, 2016).

As another piece of the puzzle, even with desegregation funds, TUSD has been struggling in recent years to fill teaching vacancies. Months after Tucson Unified was ordered to fill teacher vacancies at eight magnet schools, there are still fifteen classes in which long-term substitutes are being counted on because there are no permanent teachers (Huicochea, 2016). This has led to inconsistency in teaching, especially when there is a lack of expertise among the substitutes- and the students are the ones who suffer (Huicochea, 2016). Sylvia Campoy, the aforementioned representative of the Latino plaintiffs in the desegregation case, claims that upper socioeconomic and predominantly white schools such as Fruchthendler Elementary in Tucson have never begun their school year with five to seven vacancies as the other schools listed in the court order have (Huicochea, 2016). TUSD Superintendent Sanchez responded to Campoy's point by saying that many of the minority-heavy schools do not start their years with that many vacancies either (Huicochea, 2016). It is clear though that school districts in Arizona are struggling on many fronts, and desegregation funds might just be the tip of the educational budget iceberg.

Analysis

State Representative Debbie Lesko makes a basic and fair point in her argument against desegregation funding – it is simply unfair to other schools that do not get the same funding. Lesko and Arizona Tax Research Association president, Kevin McCarthy argue that desegregation funds are being used to hire more teachers and reduce class sizes, giving those districts that can utilize the money an unfair advantage over others that do not have that spending power (Huicochea, 2015b). TUSD Superintendent Sanchez counters this by saying that in his

district, “only teachers who meet the needs of the Unitary Status Plan have a portion of their salaries paid for with desegregation money, and those funds are not used in any case to pay teachers more” (Huicochea, 2015b). McCarthy says that desegregation funds undermine equity across districts (Huicochea, 2015b).

While Lesko’s argument makes sense at first glance, it falls apart upon taking a deeper look at the issues at hand. The root of the problem is that there are still schools in Arizona that do not have the same resources and money to educate their students properly. Many of these schools have minority and low-income heavy populations. By phasing out desegregation funding, Arizona is putting these schools, and all of the students that attend them in an even worse position than they are in currently. Removing desegregation funds because it is “unfair” is ignorant of the current disadvantages many schools in Arizona are at, and for legislators to claim that they are trying to make the situation more fair for everyone is a lie. Removing desegregation funding will not improve any school; it will only hurt the schools the money goes to now. Lesko has proposed this plan to equalize school districts without recognizing that the districts in Arizona are fundamentally unequal. The response to the inequality of education in Arizona should not be to remove funding that is aimed at helping the most disadvantaged students, but to figure out how to bring all schools and school district to a higher level success. Debbie Lesko, and her fellow legislators that support the bill to phase out desegregation funding, stated that the programs in effect to help low income and minority students are no longer necessary. However, Sylvia Campoy and her fellow Latino plaintiffs in the original desegregation case would ardently disagree, as would I.

As mentioned earlier, in Pennsylvania the government is working to distribute funding equally to all school districts. However, without raising all the districts to the same level of

education before distributing money equally, the original gaps in education will persist. Arizona needs to correct the disadvantages that low-income schools already face before deciding that everything is equal. Desegregation funds are working to do that currently. However, I do not think that desegregation funds are a sustainable model. They are a bandage on a deep wound that needs stitches. The government cannot remove that bandage before it has set up a plan to fix the wound altogether- schools that count on desegregation money to help low income and minority students will only get worse in their ability to educate, and it is detrimental to the students.

I would propose the continuation of desegregation funding until a plan has been developed to fully remedy the existing inequality that plagues Arizona's education system. Forcing students to ride on buses across town to get a better education is not a long term fix. It also ignores all the students that cannot get on the bus, the ones that are stuck enrolling in and attending the public schools in their neighborhoods that provide a sub-par education due to lack of funding. The state should invest in identifying which schools, from elementary to high school, are at a disadvantage, meaning students are performing on average below a certain standard (probably in comparison to the performances of students that attend the wealthiest, most privileged public schools). It is not necessary that all schools have the same budget or a tax donation cap, only that all schools have the ability to perform at a certain level. The state must be willing to invest in the schools that do not meet a certain criteria because the students attending less privileged schools are just as important as students at more privileged schools, and they deserve to be educated in order to reach their maximum achievement level. For the next ten or fifteen years, however long it takes, upper echelon schools must be willing to accept the fact that more money needs to be diverted to under-privileged schools in order to benefit students- something that Debbie Lesko is not willing to agree to. This is the same idea that was present in

desegregation in the first place- that this will benefit the students that need it the most, and the students that do not need it will be no worse off.

As far as student population diversity is concerned, redistricting is a remedy. However, redistricting will result in some students having to enroll in a school that has fewer resources or is lower ranked than the school they currently attend. Vice versa, students that have long been required due to where their families can afford to live, to attend lower quality schools could possibly attend better schools and receive a better education. It is a heavily debated topic. This would also be solved in the long run if legislators are willing to divert more money to improving the schools in Arizona that need it the most: schools that have teacher vacancies, facilities in need of repair, old and run down books and technology, etc. It is hard to argue for inequality in funding in a time in which it is harder to see the disadvantages students face in education, but I believe it is necessary to remedy the inequality in education as a whole.

In conclusion, desegregation funding is necessary for the next few years, until Arizona legislators have developed a plan to remedy the education gap in regards to low-income and minority students. Up to that point, desegregation funding benefits the students that need it the most, regardless of fairness. It is, in my opinion, a question of which is the most unfair: is it worse for school districts to receive unequal funding? Or is it worse for minority and low-income students to be subjected to a fundamentally poorer education due to their circumstances? I have argued that the latter deserves our attention over the former. The United States of America has a history of racism that has permeated our educational institutions, and Arizona is no exception. The inequality of the past has resulted in gaps in education for minority and students of low socioeconomic status. Desegregation funding is a partial remedy for these gaps, but there is still

a long way to go for many states and a lot of change to be made in order to best serve the future generations of students.

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