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Desegregation in US Education

Based on the work of Nora Gordon and Paul E. Peterson

“What We Know About Our Schools,” an essay by Nora Gordon and Paul E. Peterson, includes an examination of the history and current state of school desegregation efforts in the United States.

Key Points on Desegregation

1. The Supreme Court found segregation unconstitutional in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), but significant progress in desegregation didn't occur until a decade later.
2. Court-appointed federal monitors and civil rights legislation in the 1960s led to marked decreases in segregation across hundreds of southern school districts.
3. In *Milliken v. Bradley* (1974), the Supreme Court ruled that states and districts outside the South were not required to act to reduce segregation that had occurred across school district boundaries.
4. In 2007, the Supreme Court declared unconstitutional the use of race as a tiebreaker in school assignments in the absence of previous de jure segregation.
5. The racial composition of American students has changed distinctly over the past quarter century, with the share of White students falling from 65 percent in 1995 to 45 percent in 2021.
6. The percentage of Hispanic students doubled from 14 percent to 28 percent between 1995 and 2021, while the percentage of Black students remained relatively constant, declining modestly from 17 percent to 15 percent.
7. Measures of racial exposure show that 45 percent of White students, 31 percent of Hispanic students, and 23 percent of Black students are in districts where their own groups comprise at least 75 percent of the population.
8. More school segregation comes from which districts students live in rather than which schools they attend within districts.
9. Research suggests positive effects of desegregation on the performance of Black students and little, if any, effect on the achievement of Whites or other ethnic groups.

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