

Boston's History: Desegregation and Busing



Reading Comprehension & Performance Task

Title: A balanced ruling for Boston

Editorial, Boston Globe [BostonGlobe.com: <http://bit.ly/1r1Hsg1>]

Reading Level: Common Core Band: College and Career Ready

Word Count: 783

The Boston Globe

Boston Mass

Tuesday, June 25, 1974

Judge W. Arthur Garrity's ruling on Boston school segregation comes like an operation to cure a long and crippling illness. The procedure may be painful but at least it is definite and the chances of healing are great. Since this commonwealth passed the racial imbalance act nine years ago, fear of meeting its challenge has tied education in knots. Now the challenge must be met and, in the process, anxiety may be ended and the city's schools may be saved.

The US District Court findings make it clear that in fact and in practice this city has perpetuated patterns of unequal education in its public school system. But the ruling goes beyond the finding of guilty to set a clear and orderly procedure for ending that violation of state and national law. That is enormously helpful to Boston.

By ordering the Boston School Committee to go forward with implementation of the State Board of Education's short-term school balancing plan this fall, as a first step toward eliminating every vestige of racial discrimination in the public school system here, Judge Garrity has supported the earlier findings of the state courts and the work already under way in homes and churches and classrooms all over the city to make the first step work.

This city can now go ahead with pupil and teacher assignments for September. And once that step has been taken, with buses and monitors and workshops and aides properly helping to ensure safety and understanding, then Boston can at last go on—go beyond busing—to improving educational quality in every school in this city, for every child in every classroom in Boston.

And that is what has been at stake in these long nine years of stalling and rhetoric about black and white children and teachers sharing the schoolhouses of this city together, as is their right.

There are those who believed that the US Court Judge would order an immediate comprehensive desegregation plan for Boston. Work toward that goal must begin "forthwith." And precedent from San Francisco, Pasadena and Denver and earlier, from cases in Mississippi and Louisiana in 1969, indicates that implementation of the orders must continue even if the case is appealed.

Such appeals, first to the Circuit court in Boston and then to the US Supreme Court, are almost

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certain to sustain Judge Garrity's 152-page opinion. And as such, they would finally close the issue in Boston for good. But since 1965, this city has spent \$265,000 on court cases related to schools, only to be defeated under state law, under the Civil Rights Act and now under the 14th Amendment, and the bills aren't all in yet. Also, if an appeal is filed, John Bynoe of the HEW office here says it could jeopardize the release of some \$10 million in withheld Federal funds as well as preventing the grant of some \$4 million in desegregation aid. The governor has said the state will not support and appeal. This means that Boston must bear a crippling cost if it decides on a probably fruitless appeal on its own.

There are those who argue that Judge Garrity's ruling puts an unfair burden on Boston in any case and that the suburbs should be involved through a metropolitan plan. But the US Supreme Court, by a tie vote, failed to rule on such a plan for Richmond, VA; they have not yet ruled on a metropolitan plan for Detroit. And Boston, with a 30 percent minority enrollment, is unlike Detroit where minorities make up 70 percent of the school population.

For both reasons—because there is no precedent for a metropolitan court order and because Boston schools can be balanced within the city limits—Judge Garrity found that a metropolitan plan “remains of challengeable validity.”

There would, however, be nothing to prevent the state from passing such legislation on its own. And, while Gov. Sargent's financial incentive plan is plainly burdensome to black students and to the city's own school system, his concept of increased suburban involvement combined with inner city magnet programs, points in a healthy way to a metropolitan future.

Meanwhile, the most immediate and beneficial effect of the Friday court order is that it has united the governor, the mayor and many community leaders to the purpose of meeting its terms “with the least possible disruption and the maximum concern for the safety and education of the children of Boston.” And there is no time to lose if the Boston schools are to open with every provision for order and educational gain two months from now. If that can be made to happen, the tide may have turned in favor of good public schools for everyone in this city.

—THE BOSTON GLOBE

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READING-COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS (Circle Correct Answer)

1. Read the following excerpt from paragraph 1.

“Judge W. Arthur Garrity’s ruling on Boston school segregation comes like an operation to cure a long and crippling illness. The procedure may be painful but at least it is definite and the chances of healing are great. Since this commonwealth passed the racial imbalance act nine years ago, fear of meeting its challenge has tied education in knots.”

What is the explicit meaning of this statement?

- A. Judge Garrity had an earlier career as a surgeon prior to becoming a federal judge.
 - B. The decision by Judge Garrity to desegregate the Boston schools solves a longstanding problem.
 - C. It is unlikely that Judge Garrity’s decision will have any effect on the nine-year-old racial imbalance act.
 - D. Boston school segregation is very much like a terminal disease.
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2. What does Judge Garrity mean when he says that “a metropolitan plan” (paragraph 9) “remains of challengeable validity?”

- A. A plan that uses the suburbs to desegregate Boston schools would likely be overturned by the court.
 - B. The suburbs should be included in an effort to desegregate the Boston schools so that students can remain in their communities’ schools.
 - C. The estimate that Boston’s minority population is at approximately 30 percent could be easily challenged in court.
 - D. Boston’s plan to involve the suburbs in its integration efforts would refute the logic used by the U.S. Supreme Court to arrive at their decision on the Richmond, VA case.
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3. According to the argument in this editorial, what will be the *long-term* result of the “State Board of Education’s short-term school balancing plan?”

- A. “Uniting the governor, the mayor and many community leaders”
 - B. Ending “nine years of stalling and rhetoric about black and white children and teachers sharing the schoolhouses of this city together.”
 - C. “A clear and orderly procedure for ending that violation of state and national law.
 - D. “Improving educational quality in every school in this city, for every child in every classroom in Boston”
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4. Read the following passage from the article.

“There are those who believed that the US Court Judge would order an immediate comprehensive desegregation plan for Boston. Work toward that goal must begin “forthwith.” And precedent from San Francisco, Pasadena and Denver and earlier, from cases in Mississippi and Louisiana in 1969, indicates that implementation of the orders must continue even if the case is appealed.” (Paragraph 6)

According to this paragraph, the editors

- A. admit that although the desegregation plan is a good one, earlier examples suggest it will be delayed by challenges in court.
 - B. argue that the plans developed elsewhere in the United States will serve as a good model for Boston.
 - C. believe that nothing should interfere with efforts to integrate Boston’s schools.
 - D. express their disappointment with US Court Judge’s failure to provide Boston with a “blueprint” for beginning the desegregation process.
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5. Overall, the opinion expressed in this editorial is that Judge Garrity’s ruling is

- A. a fair and welcome first step toward equal educational opportunities for minority students.
 - B. the best the city of Boston can hope for given the past circumstances.
 - C. so controversial that it will be soon be overturned by a higher court.
 - D. likely to be made even better by passage of state legislation that extends this desegregation plan to the greater Boston metropolitan area.
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PERFORMANCE TASK

Writing Situation

In the editorial you have just read, the editors of *The Boston Globe* offered their opinion on Federal Judge W. Arthur Garrity's June 1974 ruling ordering the desegregation of Boston schools by busing students to schools outside their communities.

Now you will write your own editorial in response to Judge Garrity's ruling. Your editorial will be different, of course, because you have the benefit of 40 years of history and your own personal knowledge and experience to inform and support your position. However, you, like the editors of *The Globe* 40 years ago, will focus on the wisdom of Judge Garrity's decision.

Student Directions for Writing

Step 1: Close reading

- a. Reread the article using the following question to guide your reading: **Why did the editors of *The Boston Globe* call Judge Garrity's order to desegregate Boston schools "a balanced ruling for Boston?"**
- b. As you read, highlight the evidence the editors use to support their argument, as well as the counterclaims they use to refute the claims made by those who would disagree with them.
- c. Use the information you have highlighted to help you structure your argument and organize your editorial.

Step 2: Your writing assignment

Write an editorial in which you take a position on the wisdom of Judge Garrity's 1974 order to desegregate Boston schools by busing students to schools outside their communities.

While you will be responding to the claims made in *The Globe's* June 25, 1974 editorial, you will also have the benefits that come from 40 years of history to inform your argument. Consequently, be sure to use evidence from this editorial, your knowledge of the history of busing in Boston and elsewhere in the United States, and your personal experience to support your argument.

Remember to...

- plan your essay before you write;
- establish your position with a clear thesis statement;
- identify the counterclaims people who disagree with your position might make;
- include rebuttals to those counterclaims;
- support your ideas and opinions with specific evidence from the text.

READING-COMPREHENSION ANSWERS

1. B
2. A
3. D
4. C
5. A