



60 YEARS LATER: THE LEGACY OF BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION

“We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.” These are the words of the landmark Supreme Court decision on May 17, 1954 that declared segregated schools unconstitutional. Sixty years later, even though much progress has been made, there are still great inequalities and disparities in our school system.

In this lesson, students will learn more about the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling and will study two infographics in order to analyze and reflect on the modern day “school-to-prison pipeline” and the opportunity gap that both exist in our public schools.

See these additional ADL resources: *Curriculum Connections* “[Looking Back Reaching Forward: Exploring the Promise of Brown v. Board of Education](#)” and “[A Time for Sight: The Debate over Color Blindness and Race-Consciousness in School Integration Policy](#),” [Brown v. Board of Education: 60 Years Later, the Legacy Unfulfilled](#) and [From The Archives: ADL’s Involvement In Brown v. Board](#).

Grade Level: grades 6–12

Common Core Anchor Standards: Reading, Speaking and Listening

Learning Objectives:

- Students will learn more about the landmark school desegregation ruling, *Brown v. Board of Education*.
- Students will analyze and reflect on the “school-to-prison pipeline” and “opportunity gap.”
- Students will explore different perspectives on school segregation in the U.S.

Material:

- [School-to-Prison Pipeline Infographic](#) and [Opportunity Gap Infographic](#), one of each for each student
- “Is Segregation Back in the U.S. Public Schools?” (*The New York Times* Room for Debate, May 20, 2012, www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2012/05/20/is-segregation-back-in-us-public-schools), one for each student

Vocabulary:

Review the following vocabulary words and make sure students know their meanings. (See ADL's "[Glossary of Education Terms](#).")

- Access
- Comparison
- Expulsion
- Opportunity
- Certified
- Disability
- Gifted & Talented
- School-to-Prison Pipeline
- Disability
- Disparity
- Inequity
- Segregated

WHAT IS BROWN V. BOARD AND EDUCATION AND SCHOOL DESEGREGATION?

1. Ask students: *Has anyone heard of Brown v. Board of Education or school desegregation?* If no one knows what this means, explain that sixty years ago, on May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that schools could no longer be segregated and that state laws establishing separate public schools for black and white students were unconstitutional. Before this ruling, not a single African American student attended a majority white public school in the American South and many schools were segregated, which meant that African American and white students attended separate schools. This was a landmark case which was critical in our country's efforts toward ensuring equal education for all. However, even though there was much to celebrate about the decision and significant progress has been made, there are still vast inequities and disparities in our school system.
2. Explain to students that they will learn more about these inequities by reading and studying two infographics. Infographics are visual representations of information, data or knowledge and are intended to present complex information in a visually interesting and clear way. Ask if anyone has ever seen an infographic, and if so, have them share what it looked like and what information was conveyed.

ANALYZE THE INFOGRAPHICS

1. Distribute a copy of the "School-to-Prison Pipeline" infographic to each student. If you have the capacity, project it on the screen or the board. Explain that the "school-to-prison pipeline" refers to the policies and practices that push our nation's schoolchildren, especially students of color, students with disabilities and LGBT students, out of classrooms and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems. For example, imposing overly harsh penalties for misbehavior and embracing "zero tolerance" policies that automatically impose severe punishment regardless of circumstances have been implemented with certain groups of students. (To learn more about the school-to-prison pipeline, read the ACLU's [What Is The School-to-Prison Pipeline?](#))
2. As you give an overview of the infographic, have students follow along by looking at the picture graphs/data. Explain that the first picture illustrates how many black, white and other students attend pre-school compared with how many black, white and other pre-school children have had more than one out-of-school suspension. Ask if there are any clarifying questions.
3. Ask students: *How would you describe the statistics you see in the picture?* Then move to the next graph/picture in the infographic explaining the data, answering any clarifying questions and asking students to explain the numbers.
4. After reviewing the first infographic, move to the "Opportunity Gap" infographic, distributing a copy to each student. Explain that the "opportunity gap" refers to the system in which African American and Latino students have less access to certain school experiences than other students. As you did with the

first infographic, go over each picture in the infographic, explaining what the picture illustrates, answering clarifying questions and asking students to explain the data.

5. After you examine and briefly discuss each infographic with students, engage them in a general class discussion by asking the following questions:
 - Of this information, what did you already know? Did anything surprise you about the data?
 - How do you feel about the information you just learned?
 - What do the statistics and data reveal about the public school system in the U.S.?
 - Why do you think these statistics have been collected?
 - Do you think students of different races have equal access to the same education? Why or why not?
 - Why is this data important?
 - What ideas do you have about how we can make our schools more equitable?

READING ACTIVITY: IS SEGREGATION BACK IN U.S. SCHOOLS?

Distribute the eight different articles by debaters from *The New York Times* Room to Debate article, "[Is Segregation Back in U.S. Public Schools?](#)" equally among the students so that 4–5 students will read each of the articles. Give students 15–20 minutes to read their article or assign it as a homework assignment the night before. After reading the articles, have students share what they learned from the article. They should answer these questions:

- What is the author's perspective on school segregation?
- What evidence does she or he use to make the point?
- Did the writer use personal experience to convey their message and was it effective?
- Do you agree or disagree with the article?

CLOSING

Have students share something important they learned from the two infographics they studied.

ADDITIONAL READING

- [Expansive Survey of America's Public Schools Reveals Troubling Racial Disparities](#) (U.S. Department of Education, March 21, 2014)
- [The Nation's Report Card](#) (National Association of Educational Progress)
- ["The Nation's Most Segregated Schools Aren't Where You'd Think They'd Be"](#) (*Huffington Post*, March 26, 2014)
- ["Segregated Housing, Segregated Schools"](#) (*Education Week*, March 25, 2014)
- ["Punishing Young Offenders Twice"](#) (*Education Week*, January 27, 2014)
- ["School Data Finds Pattern of Inequality Along Racial Lines"](#) (*The New York Times*, March 21, 2014)
- [What Is The School-to-Prison Pipeline?](#) (American Civil Liberties Union)

COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS

Content Area/Standard
Reading
Standard 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
Standard 6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.
Speaking and Listening
Standard 2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.