

Texas Education Agency



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201 East Eleventh Street
Austin, Texas
78701

August 29, 1977

Hon. William Wayne Justice
U. S. District Judge
United States District Court
Eastern District of Texas
P. O. Box 330
Tyler, Texas 75701

Dear Judge Justice:

Pursuant to the request in your letter dated July 1, 1977, the Office of Technical Assistance sent members of its staff to Paul Pewitt Schools, Morris County, Texas, to investigate allegations of discrimination.

The investigating team did not find the Paul Pewitt Independent School District in violation of Section D. Extracurricular Activities, or of Section F. Student Assignment of Civil Action 5281.

A copy of the report is enclosed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "M. L. Brockette".

M. L. Brockette
Commissioner of Education

Enclosure

cc: A. T. Brian, Superintendent
Hon. Brian K. Landsberg, U. S. Justice Department
Hon. Theodore Miles, Office for Civil Rights
Mr. Albert Kauffman, MALDEF
Mr. E. Brice Cunningham, NAACP
Mr. Roland Allen, Assistant State Attorney General

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TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY
INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

To: M. L. Brockette, James L. Hill, Gilbert Conoley
From: Robert Alexius and Harvey King *AK R.A.*
Date: August 3, 1977
Subject: Investigation of discrimination complaint against Paul Pewitt ISD

In a letter dated July 1, 1977, Honorable William Wayne Justice, U. S. District Judge, requested an investigation of the following allegations levied against Paul Pewitt Schools:

- (1) that classes are assigned on the basis of race; and
- (2) that black students are not permitted to hold student offices or to be majorettes.

Enrollment data for the 1976-77 school year for the Paul Pewitt ISD shows that there were 341 black (34.4%), 1 Hispanic (0.1%), and 648 white (65.5%) students.

Mr. A. T. Brian, Superintendent, and Mr. Howard Carver, Principal, Paul Pewitt ISD, denied the allegations that students are assigned to classes on the basis of race and that black students are not permitted to hold student offices or to be majorettes. Mr. Carver stated that racial imbalance in any classroom was not intentional. Students are permitted to register for the courses they want to take. Schedules can be changed for approximately two weeks after the inception of the quarter.

The investigating team was supplied with a class roster for high school classes with the race of each student being indicated. According to the class rosters there were very few classes without members of both races. However, there were several classes with a high concentration of students of only one racial group. Student scheduling resulting in a high concentration of only one racial group was permitted but not encouraged by the administration.

At a regular meeting of the Pewitt School Board on April 4, 1977, the Board voted unanimously to delete that portion of the Student Handbook that requires ability grouping in the elementary and junior high schools.

The qualifications for participating in school organizations and activities presented to the investigating team were not racially discriminatory. It was apparent from studying the school yearbooks for the past five years (1971-72 to 1975-76) that blacks are represented in most activities. However, there was not a black majorette pictured in the five-year period. During this time there were black class officers, class favorites, cheerleaders, members of the national honor society, band, student council and other organizations. For two of the five years, two black male students have earned the coveted title of "Mr. Pewitt High School," and the valedictorian for one year was black.

Conclusions

Students are not assigned to classes on the basis of race. However, there are several classes with a disproportionate number of students of one race. Classes with a high concentration of black students are usually remedial classes.

The qualifications for membership in student organizations and participation in school activities do not discriminate against students on the basis of race. There have been black student class officers, but available records do not show a black majorette.

The district is trying to improve the educational climate for black students through employing more black teachers. In 1974-75, there were 10 black (16.95%) and 49 white (83.05%); whereas for the 1976-77 school year there were 14 black (22.6%), 2 American Indian (3.2%), and 46 white (74.2%) teachers. For a district of this size this could be considered a significant increase of black teachers for a two-year period.

The investigating team did not find Pewitt Independent School District to be in violation of Section D. Extra Curricular Activities or Section F. Student Assignment of the Amendments to Court Order, Civil Action 5281, United States District Court, Eastern District of Texas, Tyler Division.