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Court Orders St. James Parish School District to Continue Desegregation Efforts

On Friday evening, a federal district court in Louisiana [ruled](#) in *Banks v. St. James Parish School Board* that the St. James Parish School Board remains in violation of a consent decree requiring it to desegregate its schools. Among other issues, the Board failed to implement a reading and math program designed to integrate an all-Black school, despite the district's overall student population being relatively diverse. After reviewing the evidence presented at trial, the Court found that the district has consistently underinvested in its two nearly all-Black schools and that it must make improvements to ensure equal educational opportunity to all students in the parish.

At trial in April 2024, the [Legal Defense Fund](#) (LDF) and co-counsel Gideon Carter of Baton Rouge, which represent Black students and families in the district, urged the court to order the school board to invest more academic resources and improve the facilities at the two historically Black schools. Because of these findings, the court's ruling directs the school board to work with community members to implement concrete, practicable steps to remedy these inequalities.

"We are heartened by the Court's ruling," said **Alexsis Johnson, Assistant Counsel at LDF**. "This ruling affirms what Black families in St. James Parish have long known — that the district is failing to live up to the promises of the 2017 and 2022 orders and *Brown v. Board*. The school district's refusal in recent years to provide Black students with quality, integrated schools is deeply disappointing. We implore the district to begin to work collaboratively with all families in the parish to ensure that every student has the opportunity to succeed and thrive."

"Friday's ruling is a pivotal step for the St. James Parish community," said **Rhoda Johnson, a plaintiff in the lawsuit**. "We will remain vigilant in working to ensure that all of our students can receive equal access and opportunity within their classrooms."

LDF first filed *Banks v. St. James Parish* in 1965, 11 years after the landmark Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. Since *Brown v. Board*, LDF has been a leader in the fight to reduce racial disparities and promote access to education. Today, LDF [continues to advocate](#) for equal educational opportunities for all students.

[Read](#) the court order.

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Founded in 1940, the [Legal Defense Fund \(LDF\)](#) is the nation's first civil rights legal organization. LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957, though it was founded under the leadership of Thurgood Marshall while he was at the NAACP. LDF's Thurgood Marshall Institute (TMI) is

a division of LDF that undertakes innovative research and houses LDF's archive. In all media attributions, please refer to us as the Legal Defense Fund or LDF (do not include NAACP) and refer to the Institute as LDF's Thurgood Marshall Institute or TMI.