

The Brown Decision, Ten Years Later

Directions: Read the paragraphs below and study the map carefully. Then answer the questions that follow.

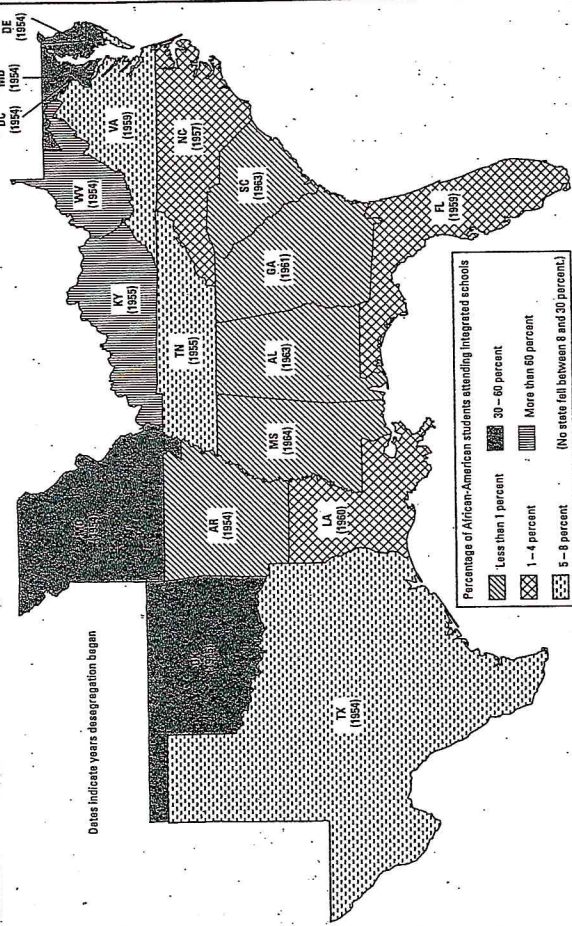
In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that to separate public-school students "solely on the basis of race" was unconstitutional. The Court had established a "separate but equal" doctrine in 1896, in its *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling, but the 1954 decision reversed that ruling. Now, the court declared that "separate but equal" has no place in public education.

The *Brown* decision, however, did not bring public-school segregation to an immediate end. The responsibility for implementing desegregation fell to local governments—to school officials who had to keep in mind state laws and regional customs. Thus, at times, the move toward statewide compliance took place slowly, almost one school at a time. When desegregation efforts lagged, the

Supreme Court issued a second *Brown* decision in 1955, directing lower courts to admit African-American students to public schools "with all deliberate speed." Eventually, in some areas of the South, the federal government had to step in and enforce desegregation.

Still, even ten years after *Brown*, only about 380,000 African-American elementary and secondary students in 17 Southern states and the District of Columbia—less than 11 percent of the 3.5 million students in the region—were going to schools with white students. In Alabama only 94 out of 89,000 African-American students, and in Mississippi only 58 out of 22,000 African-American students, attended integrated schools.

School Desegregation in the South, 1964



Interpreting Text and Visuals

1. Which states in the region shown on the map began to integrate their public schools in the year of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision? (Do not count the District of Columbia.)

2. In which states did school desegregation not begin until the 1960s?

3. What generalization can you make about the relationship between the time a state began the desegregation process and the degree of integration of its schools in 1964?

Which state is a glaring exception to that trend?

4. In which states were 30 to 60 percent of African-American students in integrated schools?

5. In which states was the percentage of African-American students in integrated schools less than the region's average?

6. Which five of the states you listed for question 5 had percentages the farthest below the regional average?

How might the economic and social history of those five states have led to a resistance to desegregation?