

Press Release

Re: Gateway Science Academy Student Lawsuit

In general students must attend school in the district in which they reside. In VICC's case, we are governed by the Federal court decision and the related Settlement Agreement which was established to address long standing school segregation issues. As such the Agreement (which was signed by many parties including the State of MO) allows for African American students residing in the City of St. Louis to attend certain participating districts in the county and conversely to allow non-African American students in participating districts in the County to attend magnet (and Charter) schools in the City with one of the primary goals being to increase the integration of the schools. This particular student's ineligibility is a straightforward application of how the program works and the rules that we must abide by.

We cannot comment specifically on the lawsuit because we have not had time to study it.

The following statement was issued by DESE on February 26, 2016:

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) would like to clarify the situation involving an African American Gateway Science Academy student denied transfer from St. Louis County to the Gateway charter school. This unfortunate situation is not due to state law or state regulations. It is a result of the student's change in residency from St. Louis City to a school district in St. Louis County.

Even if the family's new St. Louis County school district participated in the transfer program, the student would still not be able to transfer. This situation stems from the 1980 U.S. Court of Appeals ruling that the St. Louis City and County schools were maintaining segregated systems. In 1983, the schools reached a Desegregation Settlement Agreement allowing African American students to transfer into primarily white suburban school districts and for non-African American students to attend St. Louis schools. The goal was to try to balance the racial makeup of the city and county schools.

There are no state laws or DESE regulations specifically preventing African American students from transferring schools.

Please contact the DESE Communications Office if you need additional information on this situation.

Thank you.

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Communications | 573.751.3469 | dese.mo.gov