



The Impact of Arkansas' Act 60 on African-American School Leadership and Racial Composition of School Districts

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This report examines the impact of Arkansas' Act 60 on the racial composition of the student population, elected school boards, and administrative leadership of 27 districts affected by consolidations involving one or more districts with an African-American majority.

Act 60 mandated annexation or consolidation of all districts with less than 350 students. This act affected 99 districts—57 districts closed and 42 districts received students from the closed districts. Twenty-seven of these districts had a majority African-American student population, or were combined with such a district. The analysis of these 27 districts indicates that:

1. In just over half of these 27 districts, the student racial composition, at the district level, is more racially balanced after consolidation. However, for the vast majority of students (80%) in these districts, racial composition in the new consolidated districts is similar to that in their districts prior to consolidation.
2. Regardless of race, the numbers of citizens serving on school boards (from both closed and receiving districts) has been substantially reduced.
3. The number of elected African-American school board members has been decreased by 55% overall, especially in closed districts (by 71%), but in receiving districts as well (by 22%).
4. The number of districts with African-American majority school boards fell from 11 of the pre-consolidated districts to two of the resulting combined districts.
5. Five of six African-American administrators in the 27 affected districts lost their position as a result of Act 60. The number of African-American superintendents in Arkansas has fallen by 23% as a result of Act 60 (from 22 to 17).