

# 71 Years After Brown v. Board of Education...State-Funded Segregation in North Carolina

*Together, charter schools and private school tuition voucher programs have contributed to resegregating schools in North Carolina.*

RALEIGH, NC, UNITED STATES, May 21, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On May 17, 1954 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* that state-sanctioned segregation of public schools was a violation of the 14th Amendment and was therefore unconstitutional.

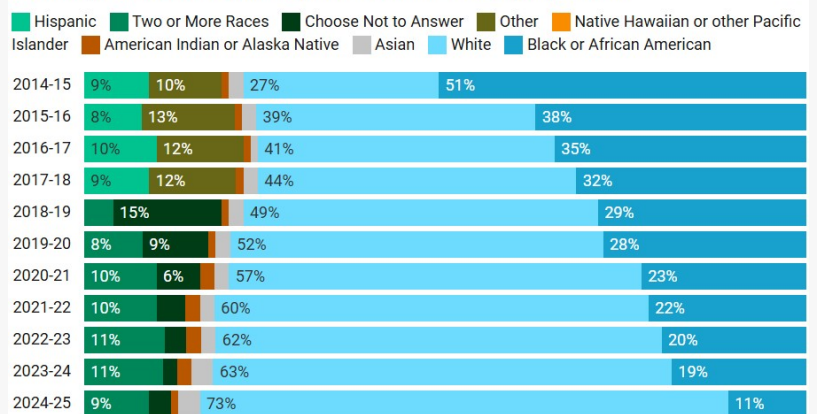
While the ruling did catalyze massive changes throughout the nation, including helping to propel the civil rights movement, the full potential of school integration was never fully realized. After school desegregation reached a high point in the 1980s, gains were lost. Schools are [rapidly resegregating](#) and are nearing late 1960s levels of segregation.

In North Carolina, reaction against school segregation produced The Pearsall Plan (1) that guided legislation to create the state's first voucher program. It allowed families to receive an "education expense grant" for private school tuition for children assigned to integrated schools.

The education expense grants were declared unconstitutional in the late 1960s, but the provisions in the Pearsall Plan slowed desegregation efforts across the state. Private schools called "segregation academies" opened in the 1960s and 1970s with the primary purpose of enrolling students whose families wanted to avoid segregated schools. (2)

## Percentage of Opportunity Scholarship Voucher Recipients by Race

Percentage of voucher recipients by race from 2014-15 through April 2025.



The demographics of families using North Carolina's private school vouchers has changed sharply over the years. Now 73% of recipients are white.

Private School	County	Private School % White (2021-22)	County Public Schools % White (2021-22)	Voucher Funds Received 2014 through April 2025
Lawrence Academy	Bertie	97%	10.1%	\$2,363,213
Northeast Academy	Northampton	99%	9.5%	\$2,730,224
Pungo Christian Academy	Beaufort	98%	43.9%	\$1,719,183
Wake Christian Academy	Wake	86%	43.7%	\$5,935,526

Segregated schools in North Carolina have received millions in taxpayer-funded tuition payments.

In 1971, Julius Chambers, a civil rights lawyer from Charlotte, successfully argued the landmark case *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* before the U.S. Supreme Court. (3) The ruling granted federal courts the power to order busing to force racial integration. The case ended government-sanctioned segregation in Southern schools.

But resistance to desegregation persisted. A 2002 ruling in *Belk v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* (filed by a white parent to end the use of busing in CMS to achieve racial diversity), the federal 4th Circuit Court of Appeals essentially dissolved the *Swann* desegregation order. (4)

By 2022, nearly half of CMS schools were more than 90% students of color, compared to 1% in 1989 and 16% in 2002. A rise in charter school enrollment has further fueled resegregation, as these schools tend to be much more racially isolated than traditional public schools.

In 2014, North Carolina's newest taxpayer-funded private school tuition voucher program launched. Unlike the voucher program of the 1950s, segregation is not the stated purpose of the latest program. However, data reveals that the program now primarily serves white students (73%). (5)

[Reporting in 2024](#) identified 39 private schools that opened as segregation academies in North Carolina and are still operating. Many of these schools have received millions in taxpayer funds. Data from a 2021-22 federal survey (the most recent data available) reveals that some still have white student populations far greater than in the local public schools. (6)

For example, the student population at Lawrence Academy in Bertie County was 97% white in 2021-22, while the student population of Bertie County Schools was just 10% white (data from the NC Statistical Profile). This highly segregated private school has received \$2,363,213 in taxpayer-funded tuition from the state.

Northeast Academy in Northampton, Pungo Christian Academy in Beaufort, and Wake Christian Academy in Wake all follow a similar pattern. They serve a strikingly disproportionate number of white students as compared to their local school district. These "segregation academies" have received millions in tuition payments from the state (i.e., taxpayers). (7)

Expansion of the taxpayer-funded private school voucher program (Opportunity Scholarships) to fund all families, regardless of income or prior public school enrollment, has worsened the segregation caused by charter schools. (8)

Together, charter schools and vouchers have returned North Carolina to an era of state-funded segregation.

1. Pearsall Plan: <https://archive.org/details/pearsallplantosa00nort/page/n1/mode/2up>
2. Segregation academies: <https://www.propublica.org/series/segregation-academies>

3. Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education:

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/402/1>

4. Belk v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education: <https://www.tinfulton.com/noteworthy-cases/belk-v-charlotte-mecklenburg-board-of-education/>

5. Data reveals: <https://publicschoolsfirstnc.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/2025.April-OS-Voucher-Demographics.pdf>

6. Federal survey: <https://nces.ed.gov/use-work/resource-library/data/data-file/private-school-survey-public-use-data-2021-22-school-year?pubid=2024010>

7. Received millions in tuition payments:

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1qC2\\_GdL1jJCcQQVCCgYe3YYf5me39YmV/edit?gid=1659564108#gid=1659564108](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1qC2_GdL1jJCcQQVCCgYe3YYf5me39YmV/edit?gid=1659564108#gid=1659564108)

8. Segregation caused by charter schools: <https://www.ncjustice.org/publications/still-stymied-why-integration-has-not-transformed-north-carolina-schools/>

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