

STATE OF MICHIGAN LAW DAY 2004 ESSAY CONTEST
“To Win Equality by Law: Brown v. Board of Education at 50”
7th Grade – 3rd Place - By Bryan Banks
Cadillac Middle School – Detroit, Michigan
Teacher – Ms. Dierdre Wells

Should a school child be allowed to attend a neighborhood school instead of being bussed across town to achieve racial diversity at a school in a different neighborhood?

Yes. A school child should be allowed to attend a neighborhood school instead of being bussed across town to achieve racial diversity at a school in a different neighborhood. It is not fair to me that a child should have to take a bus all the way across town when they could attend a school nearby. Traveling a long distance would be especially difficult in inclement weather. It only makes sense if the commute doesn't create an inconvenience to the child and his or her parents. All things being equal, a child should be able to attend any school he or she pleases.

One school may have more money than the other, with cleaner hallways, more advanced computer technology, and have a more beautiful exterior, while the other school has a barren playground, old computers, larger class sizes, and an unattractive exterior. The point is, the schools may be very different, but students at both locations could be taught in a nurturing environment and receive just as good an education at one school as the other.

In 1954, a young girl named Linda Brown rode a bus about five miles to school each day because the school located four blocks from her house was a school with an entirely Caucasian population. Linda met all of the requirements needed to attend the school, but since she was black, the school refused to admit her. I cannot imagine how badly Linda must have felt, having the opportunity to go to a brighter and more exquisite looking school than her last one, but being rejected because she was black. I know that it would have been easier going to a nearby school rather than to wait outside for a bus or walk to school about five miles in blistering cold weather, but that's how it had to be back then. Luckily for Linda, that rule about racial diversity changed. Linda Brown's father, Oliver Brown, and the N. A. A. C. P. argued for equal rights. They sued the Topeka Board of Education, in a case that is still one of America's most important, the Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483(1954).

Up to this day, children are still being bussed across town for different reasons. One reason is to increase enrollment numbers. Another reason is that by law, parents are allowed to send their children to a school in another neighborhood, or maybe a school in another neighborhood offers specific programs that other schools do not. As a result, parents may send their child to that school for that particular program.

I am fine with students being bussed across town, as long as it has nothing to do with desegregating the schools. While diversity, a core democratic value, is important in a school setting, equal access to educational resources is even more vital. In conclusion, I am thankful that Oliver Brown and the NAACP took a stand for equal rights and now we have the opportunity to attend any school we would like, regardless of our skin color.