

**STATE OF MICHIGAN LAW DAY 2004 ESSAY CONTEST**  
**“To Win Equality by Law: Brown v. Board of Education at 50”**  
**6<sup>th</sup> Grade – 1<sup>ST</sup> Place - By Nora Katterman**  
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*Should public schools in Michigan be allowed to refuse admission to the children of illegal immigrants?*

In my opinion, the State government should not be allowed to refuse the children of illegal immigrants admission to school. Since our county provides school for all children, the children of illegal immigrants should have that same right. Equality means that all people have the same rights. Being an illegal immigrant does not prevent someone from being a person under our Constitution, who therefore has the same right to go to school as someone who is a citizen.

Secondly, these kids should not be refused admission to school because it isn't the kid's choice to be in America illegally. It is the parent's decision to be an illegal immigrant and the children have to go with their parents. So, the children should not be punished for actions their parents have taken.

Another reason that people come into the U.S. illegally is for better jobs and better education for their kids. They should get an opportunity to have their children go to school, because they are taking such a big risk. If the police or government ever caught them, they would get sent back to their home country.

The main core democratic value that is involved in this argument is equality. Equality means that everyone gets equal rights. Here is the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment: "No state shall...deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." If the country provides school for children, then every child has the right to go to school.

The Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483(1954) case is related to this issue because it has to do with schools, equality and racism. This case was challenging the law that said that black kids weren't allowed to go to white schools. Illegal immigrant's children are usually non-white and, just like in Brown vs. Board of Education, I think these laws are trying to discriminate against the illegal immigrant non-white children.

This Supreme Court case that is like this question was called Plyler v. Doe, 457 U.S. 202(1982). The state of Texas passed a law that permitted only citizens and legal immigrants to attend public schools. On a 5-4 vote the Supreme Court ruled this law unconstitutional. The majority found there was no good reason to discriminate against the illegal immigrant's children. The children are "persons" under the law and, because it wasn't their choice they were in the United States, they could not be prevented from attending school. The Court thought it would be better to educate the children. If one day they were here legally, they wouldn't be homeless or unable to support them self. because they had an education, and therefore they would be contributing members of society.

I think public schools shouldn't be able to refuse admission of children of illegal immigrants. The Supreme Court said that such laws were unconstitutional because the children of illegal immigrants were "persons" under the law and therefore have to be treated equally.