Two Paths to Integration

Compare voluntary action with court-enforced change

OKH.C.8.1.E "Compare the consequences of Tulsa Public School's voluntary desegregation initiated at Booker T. Washington High School to Oklahoma City Public Schools delayed compliance resolved by a lawsuit and subsequent rulings and enforcement."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two effects of Tulsa's voluntary plan and circle two effects of Oklahoma City's court-ordered plan. Write a 1 beside one underlined effect and one circled effect that show a contrast.

How Two Districts Desegregated

1. In the early 1970s, Tulsa Public Schools chose to integrate Booker T. Washington High School, a school long attended by Black students. In 1973, the district made it a magnet school and invited students from across Tulsa to enroll. This voluntary approach brought Black and white students into the same classrooms without a court order requiring that change at this school. It also meant that a historically Black school remained open. Students could share courses and activities across racial lines, but opening one school to more students did not, by itself, settle every question about equal access across the district.

2. Oklahoma City Public Schools followed a different path. For years after the Supreme Court ruled school segregation unconstitutional, district practices kept many schools racially separated. Black families went to federal court in a case known as Dowell v. Board of Education, filed in 1961. After years of litigation and inadequate plans, a federal judge ordered a districtwide desegregation plan that used busing in 1972. Students were assigned to schools beyond their neighborhoods to reduce racial separation. Unlike Tulsa's change at one high school, Oklahoma City's plan reached across the district because court orders required action after delayed compliance.

3. These choices had different consequences for the pace and reach of change. Tulsa's school leaders could begin integration at Booker T. Washington without waiting for a judge, but a voluntary start at one school did not prove that every school had become integrated. In Oklahoma City, court enforcement produced a broader, required change, while years of delay meant students had already spent school years in separated classrooms. Later disputes over busing reached the Supreme Court. In 1991, it ruled that court oversight could end when a district showed good-faith compliance and removed the effects of its past discrimination as far as practical.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the reach of Tulsa's plan compare with the reach of Oklahoma City's court-ordered plan?

2. How did the timing of action in the two districts affect students?

3. What different roles did courts play in changing the two districts' schools?

4. How did each plan change where students could attend school?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 75 to 95 word museum label comparing the consequences of the two approaches. Explain how timing or enforcement shaped a result, then end with a question a historian could ask about lasting integration.

ANSWER KEY

Two Paths to Integration

HIGH SCHOOL · OKH.C.8.1.E

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two effects of Tulsa's voluntary plan and circle two effects of Oklahoma City's court-ordered plan. Write a 1 beside one underlined effect and one circled effect that show a contrast. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the reach of Tulsa's plan compare with the reach of Oklahoma City's court-ordered plan?	**Tulsa began voluntary integration at Booker T. Washington High School. Oklahoma City's court-ordered plan reached schools across the district.**
2	How did the timing of action in the two districts affect students?	**Tulsa began integrating Booker T. Washington without waiting for a judge. Oklahoma City's delay meant students spent additional school years in racially separated classrooms before the court-ordered plan.**
3	What different roles did courts play in changing the two districts' schools?	**Tulsa initiated the change at Booker T. Washington voluntarily, without a court order requiring it. In Oklahoma City, a lawsuit led to a court-ordered districtwide plan, and later rulings addressed when oversight could end.**
4	How did each plan change where students could attend school?	**Tulsa invited students from across the city to enroll at Booker T. Washington. Oklahoma City assigned students to schools beyond their neighborhoods under its busing plan.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Tulsa's voluntary plan brought Black and white students together at Booker T. Washington High School while keeping a historically Black school open. Because leaders began the change themselves, they did not have to wait for a court order at that school. Oklahoma City's delay had a cost: students spent more years in separated schools before a judge required a districtwide busing plan. That order reached more schools than Tulsa's first step, but neither approach alone proved that integration would last. How did enrollment patterns change in each district over time?

Accept comparisons that distinguish Tulsa's voluntary change at one high school from Oklahoma City's delayed, court-enforced districtwide plan. For the museum label, look for accurate consequences of both approaches and a question that could help assess lasting integration.