

Public Education Network Hails U.S. Supreme Court's Decision on Affirmative Action

Court Decision Highlights Urgency of K-12 Education Reforms

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Wendy Puriefoy, president of Public Education Network (PEN), a national association of 80 local education funds, applauded Monday's U.S. Supreme Court decisions as an important affirmation of diversity in education.

"Racially diverse learning environments benefit everyone, whether you are in elementary school or college," Puriefoy said. "Unfortunately, our society and our institutions continue to discriminate when it comes to recognizing capability, aptitude, and talent. This decision strengthens the ability of educational institutions to provide greater educational opportunities in places that have historically not held open the door to minority students."

By a narrow margin, the Court upheld the University of Michigan's use of race as a factor in law school admissions.

Puriefoy said that K-12 school reform advocates should feel a greater sense of urgency in implementing programs and policies that ensure that every child benefits from a high quality public education. "Too many children continue to graduate from high school unprepared for the academic challenges of higher education. Too many children drop out of school and face a world of employment that is hostile to those without critical academic, social, and work-related skills," she said.

"Much emphasis has been placed on issues of access to higher education. However, if the promise of the *No Child Left Behind* Act is to be fully realized, a clear educational pathway from pre-K to graduate school needs to be illuminated and unobstructed. Hopefully, these new rulings will help remove impediments to educational opportunity for children who suffer from the continued legacy of racism," stated Puriefoy.

Puriefoy connected the recent court decisions to the upcoming 50th anniversary of the historic 1954 case of *Brown v. the Board of Education*: "Access to education at all levels is the right of every American citizen," Puriefoy stated. "Educational institutions continue to be the battlegrounds on which the struggle for full civil rights is being fought."