

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
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DISTRICT RELEASED FROM *BLACKMAN* PORTION OF CONSENT DECREE IN *BLACKMAN-JONES* SPECIAL-EDUCATION CASES

*Court Agrees Office of the State Superintendent of Education Has Brought About
'Substantial Positive Change' in Addressing Past Problems With Due Process*

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) -- Mayor Vincent C. Gray announced today that the United States District Court for the District of Columbia has released the District from a portion of a 2006 consent decree in *Blackman v. the District of Columbia*, in which the plaintiffs contended that the District had violated the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act by failing to hold timely due-process hearings for children with special needs.

The court recognized that the District had achieved 90 percent timeliness compliance with respect to the administration of these due-process hearings.

"We are pleased that the court acknowledged the substantial progress that the District has made toward improving special-education services for our most vulnerable children," said Mayor Gray. ***"While we have a long way to go, the court's decision signals that we have made significant headway in addressing past problems."***

The Court Monitor credited the District for "substantial positive change" in the Office of the State Superintendent of Education's (OSSE) professional management of the Student Hearing Office, and the timely handling of cases and issuance of decisions. "The Office of the State Superintendent of Education and its Student Hearing Office have worked diligently to address these challenges," said the Court Monitor.

With this accomplishment, OSSE, the D.C. Public Schools and D.C. Public Charter Schools remain committed to the timely implementation of the Hearing Officer Decisions and Settlements Agreement addressed in *Blackman's* companion case, known as *Jones v. the District of Columbia*. The two cases have been consolidated. The *Blackman* case was originally filed in 1997.

The Court's decision also comes on the heels of the D.C. Council's recent passage of next year's budget, in which Mayor Gray and State Superintendent of Education Hosanna Mahaley championed an additional \$54 million toward improving special-education services provided by the District's public schools and public charter schools.

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