In an effort to delay the decision of Brown v Board of Education of Topeka Kansas (1954), governor of Arkansas, Orval Faubus, had the public school system in Little Rock placed under his authority and then crafted a plan to delay integrating the city’s schools for two and one-half years. Doing so would violate the Supreme Court’s order in Cooper v Aaron.

Historical Context

Public education in the south was not deemed an important priority in the late 19th century. Even white children rarely attended school, and when they did their education generally stopped at the sixth grade. The school year was tied to the rhythms of agriculture, and children were expected to contribute to the family as an economic unit.

The education of black children in the south was virtually non-existent, and illiteracy rates were extraordinarily high. Prior to the Civil War some of the southern states had laws against educating black children whether slave or free. During Reconstruction, a number of schools for newly freed slaves sprang up all across the south. Many of these schools owed their existence to philanthropists and religious missionaries. Even so, the curriculum was rudimentary, physical facilities were poor, and teachers were barely compensated. Black children were even more the captives of the agrarian system in the south; it was not uncommon for their school year to be shorter than that of white children.

The strategy developed by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in previous cases was to make the equalization of separate schools under the Plessy doctrine cost prohibitive. Moreover, the Supreme Court had in these cases consistently ruled that black students were entitled to the same benefits as white students. The Court had also gone so far as to rule that education involved more than books, classrooms, libraries and labs; there were certain “intangibles” to which all students were entitled, such as the ability to study together and the camaraderie that often develops among students. In Brown the plaintiffs shifted their argument; they maintained that segregated schools, even those that were equal to white schools, were unconstitutional.

In 1957 nine black students entered Central High School in Little Rock, but not until President Dwight D. Eisenhower sent the 101st Airborne Division to affect the Brown decision. The troops remained at the school for the entire year, and at the end of the school year, Faubus ordered the public schools closed.
**Question**

The United States has a political system known as federalism; government entities at the state, local and federal levels share power and authority. In an effort to prevent tyranny, the Tenth Amendment, often called the state rights amendment, ensures the states have a role to play in the federal government. However, Article Six of the Constitution says that the Constitution is the supreme law of the land. This essentially was a clash between federal and state authority. Can the states interpose (the doctrine known as interposition) themselves between their citizens and the U. S. government if they dislike a particular law or judicial decision?

**Conclusion**

In a per curiam opinion that Court reaffirmed the order in the *Brown* case.

**Contemporary Relevance**

The desegregation of the K-12 public schools was maddeningly slow. In 1963 when President John F. Kennedy sent his civil rights bill to Congress, very few southern school districts had integrated. Additional problems would also arise; the de facto segregation in northern schools was met with a hostility that matched those in the south. In the 1980s the Courts finally turned to court-ordered busing in order to integrate public schools. Whites fled to the suburbs in droves, and various social problems conspired to ensure that few white students were left in urban schools. In 1979 Linda Brown again sued the public school system in Arkansas claiming that the schools were still not integrated. In 2014, for the first time in history, white students are the minority in urban schools.

Moreover, after decades of education reform, there are still tremendous achievement gaps between white and black students. Even middle class black students score lower on standardized tests, have lower grades and are more likely to be disciplined or suspended than white students. About 70 percent of African American students graduate from high school; that still means 30 percent do not.