

Riles Suggests Program

By Sigrid Bathen
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With California's major mandatory busing plan facing uphill legal battles, state school superintendent Wilson Riles proposed Monday putting more than \$150 million into voluntary integration that emphasizes educational quality over strict ethnic balance.

"I have always felt that integration is a good thing," Riles said in a Capitol press conference, "as long as it is reasonable and feasible, and improves the quality of the schools. Unfortunately, in all of the court battles, the children are often forgotten.

"If it's a good school, parents want their kids in it. If it's not, they don't. It requires money and resources, and it is not a matter of color. Inte-

grated experiences can occur if people are imaginative enough to provide them. You don't have to transport kids to do that."

In the landmark Los Angeles busing case, U.S. Supreme Court Justice William H. Rehnquist refused late Sunday to grant a last-minute request by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People to continue mandatory busing in Los Angeles schools — in effect upholding a federal appellate court ruling that permitted the dismantling of court-ordered busing in the huge district.

Without taking a firm stand on the court battles, Riles expressed hope that proponents of court-ordered busing will back his legislative proposal for voluntary desegregation and continue to provide state desegregation money to districts

over the next 10 years.

"Courts can do many things," Riles said. "But they cannot run schools."

The voluntary proposal was jointly announced Monday in press conferences in Sacramento by Riles and Assemblyman Richard Katz, D-Sepulveda, and in Los Angeles by Sen. Alan Robbins, D-Van Nuys. Katz and Robbins are part of a legislative coalition sponsoring a bill to allow four California districts engaged in mandatory busing to use the money for voluntary efforts.

Earmarked in the 1981-82 proposed state budget, Riles said the

To Voluntarily Integrate Schools

\$150.9 million would have gone to Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Stockton and San Diego schools — with additional funding at the same level throughout the next decade.

The bulk of the money would go

to Los Angeles, which has experienced enormous administrative turmoil and the loss of thousands of students from the public schools as a result of mandatory busing.

Riles said the money would be used for improvements in school curriculum that would attract students to previously depressed schools — the notion being that students of all ethnic backgrounds will attend schools that offer high-quality education. The bill would encourage "specific efforts to combat the harmful effects of racially isolated minority schools."

The bill also would require that ownership of buses purchased for mandatory busing — \$40 million worth in Los Angeles — revert to the state Department of Education for possible assignment elsewhere.

At the press conference, Riles

questioned the notion that only integrated schools are good schools. "There is no reason blacks and Chicanos should go to a white school to get an education," he said. "It is not true that minorities get a better education if they sit alongside whites in school. Thank God that's not true."

Riles said the Los Angeles busing plan was a failure. "What came out of it was unworkable," he said. "Most of the youngsters were still segregated. Now the state either takes away all of the money or allows the districts these resources to aid integration."

Riles urged people on all sides of the busing controversy to "put all this behind us, and pull that district back together, because as long as there is conflict, kids are not being educated."

He used the Modesto school system as an example of "quality education" emerging from voluntary integration efforts. "In Modesto, they got together and decided they weren't going to have that kind of conflict, that there would be quality education for every student in every school," Riles said.

Katz said the bill is backed by the Los Angeles Unified School District, as well as by teacher groups and other districts.

At a later Capitol press conference on school finance and teacher proficiency Monday, Assembly Minority Leader Carol Hallett, R-Atascadero, said she was not fully familiar with the voluntary integration bill but that "it would take a considerable amount of argument for it before the Republicans would vote for it."