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## **State school desegregation effort begins**

The Brown Power Base Project, a coalition of black and Latino groups, wants to put pressure on community leaders for change.

By [Steve Brandt](#), Star Tribune

A new coalition of black and Latino groups organized as the Brown Power Base Project launched a new organizing effort Wednesday to attack school segregation in Minnesota.

About 75 people meeting at the Minneapolis Urban League headquarters were asked to join in what organizers hope will be a grass-roots effort. It is backed by a Minneapolis Foundation grant.

Organizers want to define strategies for reducing segregation and putting pressure on community leaders for change.

The project defines segregation broadly as practices or patterns within or between schools and districts that limit the achievement of students on the basis of race, ethnicity or gender.

"What's happening in our schools will affect our students for the rest of their lives," University of Minnesota researcher Nick Wallace told the group.

Housing discrimination concentrates minority students and causes them to attend schools with concentrated poverty, Wallace said. That deprives students of opportunities and networks that allow them to move out of poverty, he said.

The Minnesota Constitution offers promising ways to challenge lack of educational opportunity, Wallace said.

"Let's get started, Minneapolis," said Lissa Jones, executive director of African American Family Services.

Minnesota has 14 school districts with schools that meet the state's definition of being racially isolated -- those with minority percentages 20 points higher than the district average.

Minneapolis has the most with 18, or about one-quarter of its schools, followed by Osseo with 10 and St. Paul with eight. However, 16 charter schools in Minneapolis, or about half, also would be racially isolated if rated by the same criteria as district schools.

The Brown Power Base Project is a coalition of six groups, most of them advocacy nonprofits focusing on black and Latino issues.

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