

Article with unofficial notes, summary, explanations and vocabulary definitions added

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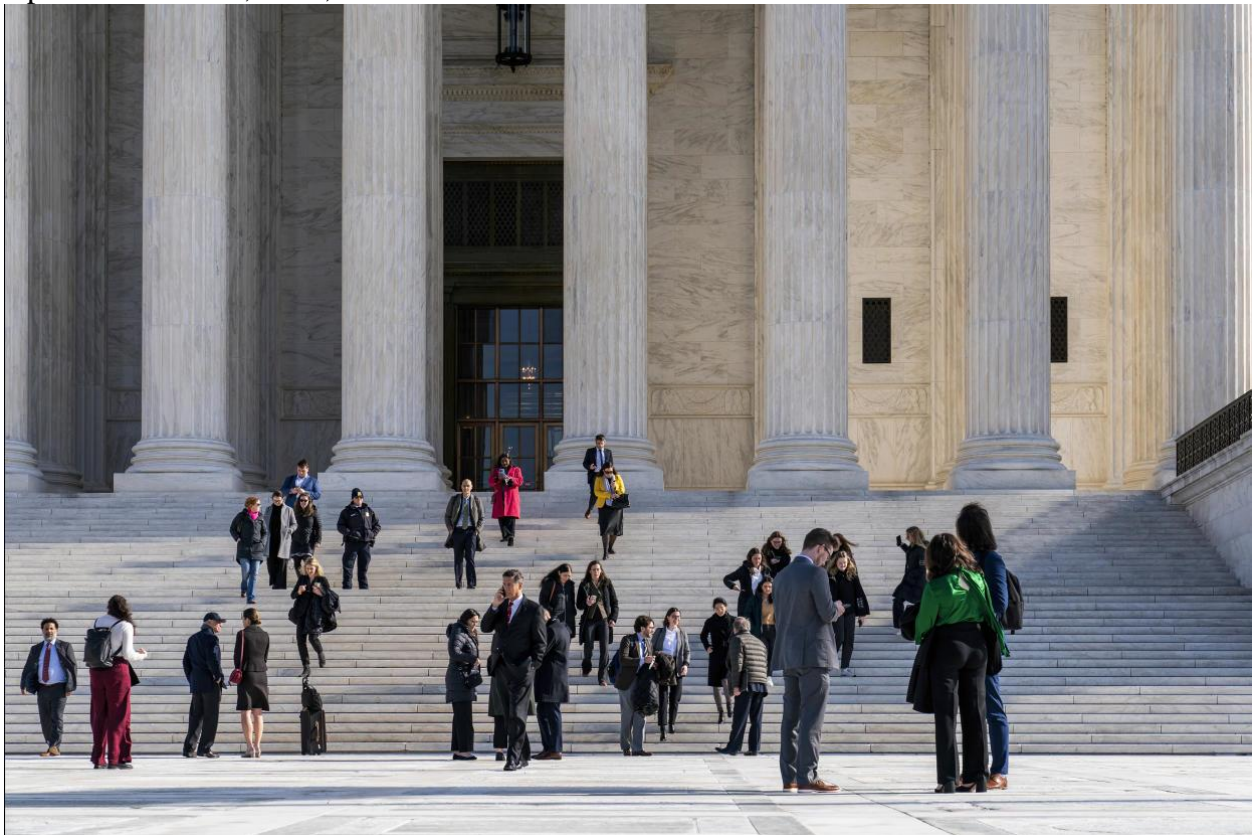
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Supreme Court rules for deaf student in education case

AP

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FILE - People leave the Supreme Court after oral arguments in *Perez v. Sturgis Public Schools*, Jan. 18, 2023, in Washington. The Supreme Court on Tuesday ruled unanimously for a deaf student who sued his public school system for providing an inadequate education, a case that's significant for other disabled students. (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite) (ASSOCIATED PRESS)

Summary:

The top United States court, the Supreme Court, ruled (decided and documented/wrote down) that a school (Sturgis Public Schools) had NOT given a good education to a deaf student (Perez).

The ruling (decision) allows the deaf student and his family to sue the school for monetary damages under a law called the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

While the deaf student was at the school for 12 years, the school did not teach him any sign language. They did not teach him anything. They just kept him in school and ignored him. They kept him with an aide (a teacher's helper) who did not know anything about teaching deaf students, and kept him with other non-teaching staff (staff who were not teachers). No one in the school was teaching him. The school did not give him real teachers. They did not teach him any real sign language. He only used invented/made-up gestures to try to communicate. He could not communicate well. The "signs" he used were just his own gestures that were not part of a real sign language. The school ignored him and left him alone often. They lied to his parents about his progress. He was not learning anything, but every year (K, 1st grade, 2nd grade, 3rd grade to 12th grade) the school told his parents that he was making progress. The school gave him fake "good grades" to pretend that he was learning. But he was NOT making progress/learning anything. At the end of high school, the school told his parents they would **not** give him a high school diploma (a real document to show that he had learned during K-12 school and had knowledge and passed tests like other high school students). Instead of giving him a real diploma, they told his parents that they would only give him a paper that said he had "finished" high school. ("finished high school" is not the same as "graduated from high school"). For 12 years, the school gave him a FAKE education, not a real education. The school neglected him (ignored him and did not teach him). The school did not even teach him a real sign language. So, after 12 years, he could not even communicate. All nine Supreme Court judges said that the school was WRONG to do this. There are two laws (the IDEA, and the ADA) in the US that the school did not follow. The family sued (took legal action against) the school under one of those laws (IDEA) and won, meaning that the school had to pay for the student to go to a school for the deaf and for him and his family to learn sign language. The family wants to also sue (take legal action against the school) under the other law, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) but lower courts said they could not sue to try to win monetary damages (money to pay for the wrong that the school did) under the ADA law. So, the case went to higher courts, and finally went to the top court, the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court ruled (decided) FOR (in support of/agreeing with) the deaf student, saying that the school did wrong to him (the school had not educated him, and the school had not even taught him to communicate in a sign language), and saying that the deaf student and his family COULD go ahead and sue for monetary damages under the ADA law.

More information

sue: to take legal action against a person or organization, especially by making a legal **claim/ask/request** for money or other ways to help improve the person's life because of some **harm/something wrong** that was caused by someone/something else

A deaf student sued his public school system for providing an inadequate education. He sued because it was the school's fault that they did not give him the instruction/teaching/help that he needed to learn to communicate in a real sign language and it was the school's fault that they did not teach him anything for 12 years. The school pretended that it was giving him an education, but this was a lie. The school lied to his parents and said that he was learning language and

learning school subjects (reading, math, science, etc.) every year. But the school was not teaching him anything from K-12 (kindergarten to high school). The school did not give him a good education.

adequate = good enough, OK, positive

Inadequate = **not** adequate, not good enough education, not real quality education

This means that the deaf student **blamed** the public school for **NOT TEACHING HIM to communicate** in a real sign language and for **NOT GIVING HIM real education** during K-12 (kindergarten to high school)

The deaf student (with the help of his family) sued (took legal action against) the public school because the school did not give him a good education

The Supreme Court is the highest court in the U.S.

The Supreme Court ruled (decided about the laws) **unanimously**

“unanimously” = 100% agreement: All nine Justices agreed

“ruled unanimously **for (supporting/agreeing with)** the deaf student” = all nine judges agreed that the school system was **WRONG** to not provide/**not** give the deaf student any instruction/teaching in a real sign language and the school was **WRONG** to **not** give the deaf student real instruction/teaching in school subjects like reading, math and science.

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court ruled unanimously Tuesday for a deaf student who sued his public school system for providing an inadequate education. The case is significant (important) **for other disabled students who allege** (say that) **they were failed by school officials.** (other disabled students also got very poor/not good enough education in school)

(The Supreme Court said that the school officials/the principals, administrators, teachers did something very wrong: The school did not make sure this deaf student learned anything, the school did not give him a real education and they did not teach him a sign language. Also, the school lied to his parents and said he was learning, but he was not learning. The Supreme Court said the school did all these wrong things and the deaf student and his family can sue under the ADA for monetary damages. (“monetary damages” = money the school must give to the deaf student and his family because of this wrong that the school did) This legal decision is important to deaf students and also to all disabled students because now any disabled students will be allowed to sue their schools if the schools are not giving them a real, good, quality education.)

The **case the justices ruled in** involves **Miguel Luna Perez, who attended public school in Sturgis, Michigan.** (Who was in this case? A deaf person – now an adult – Miguel Luna Perez, who went to public school in Sturgis, Michigan.)

Perez’s lawyers told the court that for 12 years the school system neglected the boy and lied to his parents about the progress he was making, permanently stunting his ability to communicate.

Neglected = ignored him and did not help and did not teach him, left him with a low-level staff person/aide who did not know how to teach him, and also for many hours left him alone, and the school did not give him a real education, did not give him any teachers who knew how to teach deaf students

This means that the boy’s lawyers told the court that for 12 years the school system did NOT teach him anything, and the school representatives (staff) lied to his parents, saying that he was making progress/getting better/learning/improving, but what was really happening? He was NOT learning anything. The school did not even teach him a real sign language to communicate. So, he had no language during all those years. Now it is hard for him to learn any real language. The school’s actions caused the boy to always/forever have limited/low-level communication abilities. (permanently/continuing forever) (stunting/limiting) his ability to communicate

The justices ruled that after Perez and his family settled a complaint against the school system — with officials agreeing to pay for additional schooling and sign language instruction — they could pursue money damages under a different federal law. Justice Neil Gorsuch wrote in a [eight-page opinion for the court](#) that the case “holds consequences not just for Mr. Perez but for a great many children with disabilities and their parents.”

This means that the boy and his family won the first case against the school (suing under the IDEA) and settled a complaint against the school system. This means that the school system had a legal requirement/responsibility to pay for additional (more) schooling and sign language instruction. The court required that the school send the boy to a school for the deaf. The school paid for this. Perez graduated from this other school in 2020. But his language level and education are still very, very low. This is because the Sturgis school never educated him while he was a student there. Perez’ low level of communication and education are the Sturgis school’s fault.

In this current (March 2023) case that the Supreme Court was deciding, the judges ruled/decided that the family that had already sued under the IDEA law (and won, getting the boy extra school time at a school for the deaf) and **could now also sue the school separately/again, this time suing under the ADA law for monetary damages** (the boy and his family could sue under the ADA law to try to win money to pay the boy and his family for the school’s wrong actions). The justice/judge named Neil Gorsuch wrote an eight-page opinion (document about his thoughts about the case) for the court that said that this case would affect/influence/cause help to come to many other children with disabilities and their families in the future.

It remains difficult for Perez, who emigrated to the United States from Mexico at age 9, to make himself understood.

The boy and his family came from Mexico when the boy was 9 years old.

“emigrated to the United States from Mexico” = moved from Mexico to the U.S.

“It remains (is still/continues to be) difficult for Perez ... to make himself understood (for him to communicate clearly).” Perez later learned some sign language but he still has difficulty communicating. When he signs, many people can’t understand him because he is still not skillful with sign language. This happened because he did not have the opportunity to learn sign language while he was a child. When he tried to learn sign language as an adult (at the school for the deaf) he was not able to become skillful with that real sign language.

His ability to learn language will always/forever be limited. This is the school’s fault. It was the school’s responsibility to teach him sign language, but the school never taught him sign language. They messed up his life because they caused him to have very limited communication skills. He can never catch up to the level of people who had language in their school years. His language skills will always be far behind other people’s language skills. This is the school’s fault because they did not teach him any sign language and they did not teach him anything.

Perez’s lawyers say the school system failed him by providing an aide who was not trained to work with deaf students, did not know sign language and in later years left him alone for hours at a time.

Perez’s lawyers explained that the school did not give him any teachers who knew how to work with deaf students. Instead, the school forced him to stay with an aide (helper, not a teacher) who did not know how to teach deaf students. Also, the school left the boy alone in school for many hours, again and again. The school just ignored the boy and did not give him a real education. The school did not teach him a sign language or anything else.

After over a decade, Perez did not know any formal sign language and communicated through invented signs that anyone unfamiliar with his unique signing did not understand, his lawyers have said.

His lawyers also explained that after more than 10 years (10 years = “a decade”) the boy never got any sign language instruction/no one taught him a real sign language. So, (because of that situation) the boy invented/created/made up his own “signs” that were just gestures and not real signs from a sign language. This was very, very limited communication. If anyone was familiar with/knew the boy and his unique (special, invented, not real) signing, then they might possibly be able to understand him a little bit, but most people who did not know his invented signing (people who were “unfamiliar with”/did not know him and his invented signing) would not be able to understand his signing because it wasn’t a real sign language and wasn’t clear.

Meanwhile, the school awarded him inflated grades and his parents believed he was on track to earn his high school diploma.

During all the years in school, the teachers pretended he was learning and gave him passing grades/high grades but these were fake “inflated” grades (fake grades that were lies). Because the school gave him fake positive grades, his parents thought he was making progress/learning K-12

and that he would earn/get his high school diploma (document showing proof that he had learned what he needed to know K-12 and passed high school tests).

Just before graduation, however, his family was told he qualified only for a “certificate of completion.”

However (BUT) very soon before graduation, the school told his family that they would **not** give him a high school diploma. Instead, the school would only give him a paper saying that he “finished” (completed) school. This “certificate of completion” would NOT be a diploma, it would be only a “certificate of completion” (paper) saying that he had finished high school.

His family responded by pursuing claims under two laws: the broad Americans with Disabilities Act, which prohibits discrimination against disabled people, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The latter guarantees children with disabilities a free public education that is tailored to their specific needs.

His family then sued (pursued claims) under two laws:

1. The ADA, which prohibits (does not allow) discrimination (discrimination: Unequal/not equal, lower-level services and rights for disabled people compared with higher-level services and rights for non-disabled/ able persons)
2. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA: This guarantees/promises/requires children with disabilities to get a free public education that is tailored to/fits/matches with their specific/exact needs)

Perez’s family and the school district ultimately settled the IDEA claims. The district agreed to pay for extra schooling and sign language instruction for Perez and his family, among other things, and he graduated from the Michigan School for the deaf in 2020. After the settlement, the family went to federal court and, under the ADA, sought monetary damages, which are not available under the IDEA.

Perez’s family and the school district did complete an agreement about the IDEA act. That means that the school district had to pay for Perez to get more schooling and for Perez and his family to get sign language instruction. He graduated from the Michigan School for the deaf in 2020.

The family then sued again under the ADA, trying to win monetary damages (money the school would have to pay to the family because of the school not following the ADA laws to give a free public school education and the damage/problems caused to Perez because of this).

If someone sues under the ADA, they can win a case and get money, but if someone sues under the IDEA, they can’t win money in the case.

The parents won their IDEA case and got extra schooling for their son. After that, the family went to federal court to try to get monetary damages/win money from the school district because of the school district’s wrong actions.

What is federal court? Federal court is a court established by/set up by the U.S. government to decide disputes concerning/about the federal Constitution, laws passed by Congress, treaties, and some special kinds of cases.

Lower federal courts said Perez was barred from pursuing his ADA claims because of language in the IDEA, but the Supreme Court disagreed. Gorsuch wrote: “We clarify that nothing” in the IDEA “bars his way.”

Lower federal courts said that specific descriptions of the IDEA law would **not** allow Perez to sue for monetary damages under the ADA. These lower courts said Perez and his family could NOT sue under the ADA to win money in a case. These courts said that the IDEA law barred/blocked winning money by suing under the ADA law.

But the Supreme Court disagreed. (Did NOT agree with that) The Supreme Court said that there is nothing in the IDEA law that would stop the family from being able to sue under the ADA for monetary damages. So the family COULD go ahead and sue the school again, this time suing under the ADA for monetary damages. (money that the family could win because of the wrong that the school did to their son)

clarify = make clear to see

that nothing in the IDEA (law) “bars his way” = There is nothing in the IDEA law that stops him from being able to sue/blocks suing. He and his family CAN sue through the ADA.

The judges say that there is nothing that can stop him from suing for monetary damages under the ADA. He and his family CAN sue to try to win money from a court case under the Americans with Disabilities Act/ADA.

The Biden administration had also urged the court to side with Perez. The case is Perez v. Sturgis Public Schools, 21-887.

This means that President Biden also said that he hoped the court would agree with Perez and show that Perez should be allowed to sue under the ADA for monetary damages (to try to win money because of the school causing so much damage to him),

urged/encouraged/pushed/supported

bar/stop/prevent/block

There is nothing that bars his way/nothing stops him from suing under the ADA. He CAN sue under the ADA for monetary damages (money the school must give him because of what the school did wrong to him).

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