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## Testimony ends in English-learning trial; Ariz. schools expect verdict as early as March

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PHOENIX — A federal judge has finished a trial in a nearly 15-year-old educational funding case, setting the stage for a ruling as early as late March on whether the state needs to do more to improve school programs for students learning the English language.

U.S. District Judge Raner C. Collins heard the 13th and final witness on Thursday, which was the eighth day of testimony in the trial that began Jan. 9. It was originally expected to conclude Jan. 12.

Collins did not hear closing arguments. Instead, he ordered attorneys to file legal briefs on March 12.

If Collins again rules that a 2006 state law falls short of complying with a federal law requiring equal opportunities in education, the Legislature could be forced to wrestle with the contentious issue again this session.

Collins essentially is reconsidering an April ruling in which he found that the 2006 law revamping state programs was inadequate. He fined the state \$21 million before the Legislature enacted the law on March 2.

A federal appeals court later overturned Collins' ruling, ordering him to consider the impact of educational system changes made since another judge ruled in 2000 that Arizona's English Language Learning programs were inadequate in such areas as teacher training, class sizes and instructional material. That ruling wiped out the fines, too.

The class-action lawsuit was filed in 1992 on behalf of parents and students from the Southern Arizona district.

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