Center for American Progress

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Isolated and Segregated

A New Look at the Income Divide in Our Nation's Schooling System

By Ulrich Boser and Perpetual Baffour May 2017

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Contents

1 Introduction and summary

9 Background

12 The benefits of economically diverse schools

15 Causes of economic segregation in schools

18 Findings

30 Recent efforts to address school segregation

38 Recommendations

44 Conclusion

46 Appendix

57 Endnotes

Introduction and summary

Austin, Texas, is one of the most racially diverse, culturally vibrant, and progressive cities in the nation. But for residents, the city splits into two worlds with vastly different living experiences. On the west side lies Austin's affluent population: about 200,000 residents who have accumulated some of the greatest amount of wealth in the world.[1] To the east, more than half of local residents live 200 percent below the poverty line.[2] Although Austin, Texas, is considered "America's next great boomtown,"[3] it is also one of America's most economically segregated cities.

The city's long history of segregation can be felt in the public schooling system. More than three-quarters of Austin's public schools, for instance, have a poverty rate that is either 80 percent and higher or 40 percent and lower.[4]

But deeply ingrained and pervasive economic segregation in Austin's public schools is no isolated incident. In fact, it reflects a disturbing, nationwide trend. Millions of students across the country attend schools that are intensely segregated by economic status. Today, 40 percent of all low-income children—or 10 million students—attend schools with poverty rates reaching 75 percent or higher.[5]

Rising income inequality has contributed to these trends of economic segregation[6] and thus further exacerbates many of the nation's student achievement issues. When it comes to high-school completion, students attending high-poverty schools—or schools where at least 75 percent of students are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch—only have a 68 percent chance of graduating.[7] In comparison, students attending low-poverty schools—or where 25 percent or less of students qualify for free and reduced-price lunch—have a 91 percent chance of graduating.[8]

Moreover, all students—rich or poor, white and nonwhite alike—miss out on the substantial benefits of learning in richly diverse classrooms.[9] As the research shows, students across the spectrum are better prepared for post-secondary success when they have been educated in diverse schools and have learned alongside peers who come from all walks of life.[10]

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in creating schools that are economically integrated. At the federal level, former U.S. Secretary of Education John B. King Jr. prioritized school diversity through a number of federal grant programs, including the Investing in Innovation Fund, or I3, Magnet School Assistance Program, and Charter School Program grant competitions.[11] Additionally, in December 2016, the U.S. Department of Education announced the Opening Doors, Expanding Opportunities grant competition, which will use funds from the 2016 fiscal year to support school districts in increasing socioeconomic diversity in their schools.[12]

Integrating schools by income rather than race

Segregation by income very often moves in tandem with segregation by race. In addition to attending racially segregated schools, black and Latino students are significantly more likely to attend high-poverty schools.[13] The Civil Rights Project at the University of California, Los Angeles, calls this phenomenon "double segregation."[14]

This report, however, emphasizes economic—rather than racial—segregation for a few reasons. Over the past decade, a growing number of schools and districts have integrated based on students' socioeconomic status rather than by race or ethnicity. Part of the reason for this shift is a recent U.S. Supreme Court opinion that suggested it may not be constitutionally sound for schools and districts to integrate solely based on students' race or ethnicity.[15] Responding to this opinion, most school integration policies have shifted away from using race as a determining factor in student assignment.

In addition, schools that are economically integrated are also usually racially integrated. And, finally, integrating schools by income rather than race allows schools and districts to move beyond the negative public opinion of so-called forced bussing and other racially charged policies of the past. The Center for American Progress hopes that this report's focus on economic integration is reflective of current policies and practices and helpful for future stakeholders and policymakers.

The Trump administration, on the other hand, has shown no signs that they would make the issue of school diversity a priority. In fact, Trump's Education Department has reversed federal action on this issue by ending the Opening Doors, Expanding Opportunities grant program.[16] For her part, U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos recently stated that she would support diversity under the Magnet School Assistance Program; only time will tell if this is a true priority or rhetoric.[17]

Furthermore, Donald Trump entered his presidency on a divisive campaign that threatened many of the bonds that hold modern Americans together. He called Mexicans "rapists."[18] He disparaged African Americans.[19] At his rallies, he encouraged violence.[20] In short, the nation needs an effort to bring its citizens closer together, and public schools are a critical space for teaching and embracing this nation's diversity.

Fortunately, in some areas, the notion of economic integration has taken hold at the local level. In fact, many districts that originally submitted applications for the Opening Doors, Expanding Opportunities grants are still moving forward with their diversity plans, in spite of the Trump administration's recent decision to cut the program. And charter school networks and school districts in major cities such as New York and Los Angeles have recently started implementing programs to integrate their low- and high-poverty schools.[21]

But much more work remains. To shed light on the issue of economic segregation, the authors engaged in a study to find the most and least segregated school districts nationwide. While state and federal policies can and should provide incentives for schools and districts to integrate, the real work lies at the local level.[22]

CAP's hope is that education leaders and policymakers will use this report to guide and inform their integration policies. It is no longer sufficient for districts to say that they are prioritizing integration; they must actually establish and enact policies to that effect. The information in this report, then, takes a first step toward providing the research necessary to understand the pervasiveness of economic segregation.

In this regard, CAP's report has three aims:

- Examine public opinion on the issue of economic segregation and integration in schools
- Evaluate the degree to which school districts are segregated by income
- Identify viable policy solutions for schools and districts to create economically diverse schools

To realize these aims, this report contains a wide variety of research. First, it analyzes results from a nationally representative survey, which assessed Americans' perceptions of and ideas about school segregation. Second, the authors present findings from focus groups with parents of school-age children, describing their views on specific desegregation policies. Third, CAP partnered with EdBuild, a national nonprofit and policy studies organization, and analyzed data from more than 1,700 school districts to evaluate economic segregation within each district. Finally, the authors identified a handful of districts that have implemented socioeconomic integration policies and have relatively low levels of economic segregation.

The authors define economic segregation as:

- Large concentrations of low-income students in high-poverty schools
- Large concentrations of high-income students in low-poverty schools
- The degree to which poverty rates of individual schools differ from the district average

The authors relied on data about students' eligibility for free and reduced-price lunch as a measure of poverty.

An overview of findings

Most Americans support the economic integration of schools

Nearly two-thirds of Americans consider the issue of school segregation to be "somewhat important" or "very important" to them, and 70 percent of Americans agree that more should be done to integrate low- and high-poverty schools.

4 out of 10 U.S. public-school districts experience intense economic segregation or isolation

The authors identified 40 percent of the districts in their sample as "hypersegregated" or "hyperisolated" by income. In other words, most students in the district attend schools with students of similar income backgrounds, or most of the district's schools look very different from the district as a whole in terms of poverty levels. The authors call this group the "Diversity Watch List."

A handful of districts have implemented promising policies and practices in economic integration

Since 2007, the number of districts implementing economic integration plans has more than doubled, from 40 to 100 nationwide.[23] These districts tend to be large and urban, and today, roughly 4 million students reside in a school district or charter school with economic integration plans—representing about 8 percent of total public school enrollment.[24]

Parents are skeptical of integration polices that limit parental choice or neglect the issue of school quality

According to the authors' focus group research, most parents believe in school diversity in theory, but they reject policies that limit the educational options for their child.

Most Americans see economic segregation as an issue affecting low-income students, but not necessarily higher-income students

Although research shows that all students gain immense benefits from economic integration, the public is not aware of these shared benefits. According to CAP's survey, more than three-quarters of Americans agree that school integration will improve the quality of education received by low-income students, but less than half of the public agrees that integration will improve the quality of education received by high-income students.

A growing body of research shows that learning in diverse classrooms is essential for students' success in college, career, and life. To enhance diversity in public schools, and provide students the additional opportunities, resources, and benefits that lie within diverse schools and classrooms, CAP offers the following recommendations.

Next steps for economic integration

What the federal government should do

- **Expand federal funding for economic integration strategies.** The U.S. Department of Education should increase funding to existing programs supporting socioeconomic diversity and establish a new competitive grant to encourage more economically diverse districts. The federal approach should also go beyond schooling policy and encourage the development of mixed-income housing and other affordable housing opportunities for low-income families in affluent neighborhoods.

- **Promote socioeconomic integration as a school improvement strategy.** The Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA, includes a new provision for states to set aside at least 7 percent of their Title I funds for school improvement purposes. The U.S. Department of Education should issue guidance on leveraging these funds to create economically diverse schools as part of a school improvement strategy.

- **Incentivize and/or require states to track and report patterns of school segregation.** The U.S. Department of Education should create incentives, guidelines, and requirements for states to track and collect longitudinal data regarding student demographics and enrollment patterns. The department should require states to report this data in a way that informs strategies to diversify their schools.

What states should do

- **Incentivize the creation of high-performing, diverse-by-design charter schools.** States should have dedicated funding streams that support the creation of high-performing, diverse-by-design charter schools. States can also incentivize charter school diversity through new competitive grant programs or by leveraging funds made available by the federal Charter School Program.

- **Encourage regional enrollment models.** State legislatures should establish laws and policies that not only allow but also incentivize schools to enroll students from diverse areas, including the development of regional charter schools that cross traditional school district boundaries.

- **Equalize funding across and within school districts.** States should equalize school funding across and within school districts. Across districts, inequitable funding systems promote economic segregation by making local areas overly dependent on local funding, incentivizing district leaders to exclude low-income neighborhoods from their borders. Within districts, well-resourced schools tend to serve affluent communities while under-resourced schools tend to serve low-income communities. States should equalize funding within and across districts to reduce these patterns of economic segregation.

- **Track and report patterns of school segregation.** The collection of longitudinal data regarding student demographics and enrollment patterns would enable school districts to thoughtfully address segregation issues, and would allow schools to purposefully locate in areas that are in need of more diverse schools.

- **Support housing development as a way to foster economic integration in schools.** States can foster economic integration in public schools by funding mixed-income housing development projects. States should also outlaw policies that exclude low-income families from wealthy neighborhood properties.

What school districts should do

- **Include parents in economic integration plans and provide specialized programs that appeal to a wide range of families.** Districts should consult racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse parents during the planning stages of integration strategies to build trust, create buy-in, and develop a more informed decision on diversifying their schools. Districts should also focus on methods of socioeconomic integration that appeal to families across a range of income levels.

- **Implement controlled choice programs.** Districts should consider income background and socioeconomic status in their student assignment systems. More specifically, weighted lottery systems can ensure schools have an economically diverse student body. These so-called controlled choice programs allow parents to rank-order their preferred schools, but district leaders can take into account the parent's education level, income background, and special needs during the assignment process.

- **Encourage interdistrict and intradistrict transfers.** Districts should work together to permit parents to indicate a preference for a school within or outside of their local district—prioritizing transfers that would be integrative.[25]

- **Redraw attendance zone boundaries to ensure neighborhood schools pull from an economically diverse student population.** Districts should shift away from the traditional notion of a neighborhood school and redraw attendance zone boundaries so that they transcend neighborhood lines. When creating new schools to accommodate a growing population, districts should be strategic in placing these schools in areas located between low- and high-income neighborhoods.

- **Partner with county agencies to create inclusionary zoning policies.** School districts should partner with housing agency officials, elected officials, and other municipal government leaders to investigate segregation patterns in their communities. Leaders should work together to create inclusionary zoning policies that require the creation of affordable housing in higher-income neighborhoods. This measure will help create more integrated neighborhoods and, ultimately, diverse schools.

- **Fund capacity-building efforts.** Even if a school is well-integrated, segregation patterns can still take place at the classroom level. It takes intentional work from school leaders, as well as classroom teachers, to develop a school curriculum and culture that meet the needs of a culturally and economically diverse student body. Thus, districts should invest in the development of successful learning models for diverse schools.

There must also be additional research on the effectiveness of these integration methods, to ensure federal, state, and local policymakers are investing in evidence-based interventions proven to not only improve school diversity but also boost student outcomes. With the rapid changes in the economic and racial makeup of the nation's public schooling system, researchers, scholars, policymakers, and practitioners can no longer afford to sit idly by as the country's schools become increasingly segregated on socioeconomic lines.

Background

Educational disparities between lower- and higher-income students have noticeably widened in recent years. In fact, income-based disparities among students are now larger than racial disparities,[26] and low-income children are 15 percent less likely to graduate from high school than their high-income peers.[27]

The causes of this gap are many and well-documented. Many low-income students encounter a host of disadvantages outside of school that are likely to affect their educational achievement.[28] For instance, low-income students are less likely to benefit from parents with postsecondary degrees. Studies have shown that the mother's education level strongly predicts the achievement of the child, and among low-income families, the mother's education level usually does not exceed a high school diploma.[29]

Children living in low-income neighborhoods also have increased exposure to hardship in their communities. These communities tend to lack access to meaningful job opportunities and face chronic unemployment. As a consequence, members are more likely to be distressed by mental health challenges, substance abuse, crime, and high levels of incarceration. Furthermore, residents of these communities are also excessively exposed to pollutants and environmental hazards. The trauma associated with all of these conditions poses serious negative consequences for a child's well-being and brain development.[30]

But while family and community factors are strong predictors of student achievement, school-level factors matter as well. In fact, in 1966, James Coleman, an American sociologist and researcher, released a report that studied more than 650,000 students nationwide and found that the level of student poverty in a school is the single most determinative school-level factor in a student's academic achievement.[31]

Since the Coleman report, study after study has shown that low-income children who attend high-poverty schools fare worse than low-income children who attend low-poverty schools.

Early efforts at more economically integrated schools

Coleman's report sparked a number of reforms. In the 1970's, La Crosse, Wisconsin, became the first municipality to intentionally create economically diverse schools. To do so, La Crosse redrew student attendance boundaries so that about 15 to 45 percent of students within each school came from low-income families.[32]

Since then, an increasing number of schools and districts across the country have adopted policies that create income diversity within their schools. Although the approach differs, the goal is the same: to create schools that serve both high-income and low-income students and ultimately improve academic and life outcomes for all students.

During the 1990's and early 2000's, economic integration saw somewhat slow growth, with a few major school districts, including Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Wake County, North Carolina, instituting policies that created economically balanced student bodies within their schools.

After the 2007 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1,* which limited the voluntary use of race in school assignment plans,[33] the number of schools and districts using socio-economic integration policies grew rapidly. In 2007, about 40 districts were implementing socioeconomic integration plans; by 2016, that figure more than doubled to 100 school districts and charter networks, according to The Century Foundation.[34] Today, 4.4 million students attend school districts or charter school networks with socioeconomic integration plans—representing about 8 percent of the public schooling population. These students attend more than 6,000 schools.[35]

Despite these efforts, economic segregation within school systems has grown worse. One study, for instance, found that among the country's largest 100 school districts, economic segregation between schools in the same district has risen 40 percent since 1970.[36]

"If incentives are there, families will reach and move to promote diversity."

—Focus group parent

The history of racial school segregation

This report aims to shed light on the ways economic segregation shapes the public schooling system. Historically, however, the issue of school segregation has been about race. The authors acknowledge this history. For centuries, racially discriminatory policies—in both the North and South—separated black and white children and promoted a system of de jure segregation.

The beginning of the end for state-sponsored segregation came in 1954 when the U.S. Supreme Court stated in *Brown v. Board of Education* that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."[37] Thanks in part to multiple court orders and strong federal enforcement, school districts began to implement racial integration policies.[38] From the 1960s through the 1980s, there was a general growth in school district integration as an increasing number of states and districts heeded *Brown's* mandate and created bussing policies and magnet schools that joined black and white students across neighborhood boundaries.

However, in spite of numerous court battles and civil rights victories, racially segregated education never disappeared. In fact, during the 1990's, America's schools racially resegregated, which has left African American students more isolated than they were a generation ago. In fact, today, more than one-third of all students attend schools where at least 90 percent of their peers are of the same race or ethnicity.[39]

One clear cause of this resegregation was the Supreme Court authorizing the termination of desegregation plans.[40] Gary Orfield with the UCLA Civil Rights Project explains, "segregation increased substantially after [integration] plans were terminated in many large districts."[41] Additionally, rapid growth of America's Latino population over the past decade has contributed to growing isolation of Latino students, often in high-poverty schools.[42]

Another clear cause of increased racial segregation was the decline in federal enforcement of court desegregation orders. During the 1970s and 1980s, for instance, the Nixon and Reagan administrations strongly opposed court-ordered busing—then a popular method of district integration—and weakened civil rights policies that would have promoted systemwide desegregation plans.[43]

The historical legacy of racial segregation also explains why students of color disproportionately attend economically segregated schools. For instance, black and Latino students are five times more likely to attend high-poverty schools than white students.[44] Recent census data also show that black and Hispanic Americans live in poverty at more than twice the rate of non-Hispanic whites, and they are significantly much more likely to live in extreme poverty.[45]

A large number of black middle-class families also reside in low-income neighborhoods, and as a result, their children are more likely to attend low-income schools compared to white, middle-class families.[46]

The benefits of economically diverse schools

"Making schools more socioeconomically diverse benefits the kids. It builds skills to integrate better in diverse populations and prepares them for better interpersonal relationships. It teaches them to have empathy for one another and develop coping skills." —Focus group parent

Decades of research have shown that low-income students have better academic outcomes when they attend economically diverse schools. For example, among low-income fourth graders, students who attend low-poverty schools are two grade levels ahead of their peers in high-poverty schools. according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress.[47] Students in economically integrated schools also have higher college attendance rates than students in segregated school settings.[48]

Benefits for low-income students

Students perform better in economically diverse schools for a number of reasons. The first is the quality of teachers: Research shows that the country's best and most experienced teachers are more likely to work in schools with low levels of poverty.[49] On the other hand, new and inexperienced teachers disproportionately work in high-poverty school settings. In fact, 14 percent of teachers in high-poverty schools have three or fewer years of experience, compared to 9 percent of teachers at low-poverty schools.[50]

Parents in low-poverty schools also tend to have a more flexible work schedule, which allows them greater time to give to the school community than low-income parents. Affluent parents also have the resources and social capital necessary to hold school officials accountable for school performance.[51] When low-income students attend economically diverse schools, they benefit from these advantages accruing from middle- and high-income parents.

Moreover, when low-income students attend mixed-income schools, they gain greater exposure to a positive school climate, culture of high expectations, and rigorous instruction. Research also finds that low-income students benefit from the peer effects of learning alongside higher-income students, particularly those who are higher-performing. Exposure to peers with strong records of academic achievement helps boost a student's own performance, research shows.[52]

Benefits for all students

Significantly, income diversity offers substantial benefits for every child in the classroom, not just those who are disadvantaged. Since economic segregation closely mirrors racial segregation, integrating schools by income will help create racial and ethnic diversity as well, and this form of diversity produces numerous benefits. For instance, one study found that students attending racially diverse schools are less likely to hold stereotypes, more likely to form friendships with students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, and are more developed in cross-cultural understanding and tolerance.[53] In a globalized economy where workplaces are increasingly diverse, being able to work productively with people from all walks of life is an invaluable skill.

Furthermore, research shows that working in diverse groups not only prepares students for post-secondary success, but it also improves their cognitive abilities. For instance, one study by the National Coalition on School Diversity found that white students who attended racially diverse schools improved their critical thinking and problem-solving skills much more significantly than white students in racially homogenous schools.[54] In another study, researchers found that when people are placed in culturally diverse groups, their problem-solving ability, as well as their accuracy, improve as they spent more time interacting with one another.[55] The researchers posit that the results of this study are due to the fact that, "by disrupting conformity, racial and ethnic diversity prompts people to scrutinize facts, think more deeply, and develop their own opinions."[56]

The evidence is clear, but it is important to note that achieving school-level diversity does not immediately eliminate all disparities that affect students. Issues of tracking, bias, and differential treatment can still disadvantage certain populations,

even if the school community is diverse. However, meaningfully integrated schools provide opportunities for enhanced social cohesion, cooperation across lines of difference, and eventually greater life incomes. All students, regardless of socioeconomic status or race, are recipients of these benefits.

When students learn in economically segregated school settings, they miss out on the incredible learning and creative opportunities that come from working with a diverse group of peers.

Causes of economic segregation in schools

The recent literature on economic segregation lists some specific drivers of increased isolationism, and the authors look at those topics in turn.

Housing segregation

The segregation of public schools often reflects larger trends of isolation in residential communities.

Mixed-income neighborhoods are not the norm for most Americans. Residential areas tend to be homogenous in terms of race, ethnicity, and household income. Housing policies in the United States—from real-estate investments to lending practices and zoning ordinances—have formalized conditions of economic, residential isolation. While higher-income families can afford high-priced, affluent properties in sought-after neighborhoods, lower-income families are usually left with housing options located in lower-quality areas.

In fact, a growing body of research shows that residential segregation by income has risen sharply over the past few decades.[57] Schools have been a victim of this shift, and today students are more likely to attend schools with peers of similar backgrounds than they were 50 years ago.[58]

The growth of housing segregation is also inherently tied to a nationwide rise in income inequality. Since the 1980s, wealth is increasingly concentrated in the hands of the top 10 percent of Americans. The number of people living in poverty, on the other hand, doubled between 2000 and 2013, reaching almost 14 million Americans.[59]

Attendance zone boundaries

Most students attend schools based on their neighborhood location, or their attendance zones. While this is the nature of traditional student assignment systems, the attendance zones often reinforce structures of residential segregation. Most often, more affluent students are zoned to schools filled with the affluent peers in their neighborhood, and lower-income students are zoned to schools with students of similar backgrounds.

In extreme cases, however, attendance zones are deliberately drawn to exclude poor students from affluent schools.[60] However, gerrymandering attendance zones is far less common than drawing zones that merely reflect the characteristics of the local area.[61] Most school assignment systems sort students based on their place of residence, mimicking patterns of housing segregation.

School district boundaries also add to the problem. Many high-poverty districts are unable to meaningfully integrate their schools because the students they serve are either entirely low-income or entirely high-income. To illustrate this point, consider the fact that nearly half of all low-income public students attend school in a district where 75 percent of their peers are also low-income.[62]

High-poverty districts also often border significantly wealthier districts. The neighboring districts of Detroit Public Schools and Grosse Pointe Public School System in Michigan offer a stark example of this trend. In Detroit, the median household income is $54,000,[63] but in Grosse Pointe, the median household income is $101,000.[64] Such stories highlight the saddening reality that, increasingly, wealth separates students at the classroom, school, and district levels.

School funding

School funding also contributes to economic segregation. Public schools receive federal, state, and local funds to operate their schools, but the local source of revenue often takes up the greatest share of that mix. About 40 to 60 percent of every school's budget is dependent upon local funding, and these funds are raised through the neighborhood's property tax base. Low-income families, who tend to reside in areas with low property values, raise fewer funds for their local schools. On the other hand, higher-income families, who tend to live in high-priced properties, can boast higher-quality schools since they have a richer tax base.[65]

Since public school finance systems make local areas heavily dependent on local funding, school districts are incentivized to create boundaries that exclude lower-income neighborhoods. As EdBuild puts it: "The way we fund schools in the United States creates incentives for communities to segregate along socio-economic lines in order to preserve local wealth. In so doing, communities create arbitrary borders that serve to lock students into, or out of, opportunity."[66]

Schools in low-wealth neighborhoods raise smaller amounts of local revenue due to the weaker tax base. These school districts are less able to build beautiful school facilities, attract high-quality staff, and design compelling school programming. It is a situation that fuels a cycle in which parents who can afford high-priced properties flood to those wealthier areas, and the neighborhood schools receive greater funding for programs, supports, and services.

Findings

The authors conducted three studies to elevate the issue of economic school segregation:

- A national survey of Americans' attitudes and perceptions of economic segregation
- Focus groups with racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse parents of school-age children
- An analysis of district-level segregation using school-level data on income demographics

The authors' findings are outlined below.

Most Americans support the economic integration of schools

As part of this report, the authors conducted a survey that assessed Americans' beliefs and attitudes toward economic segregation in schools. According to the survey, 64 percent of Americans consider the issue of school segregation to be "somewhat important" or "very important" to them, and 70 percent of Americans agree that more should be done to integrate low- and high-poverty schools.

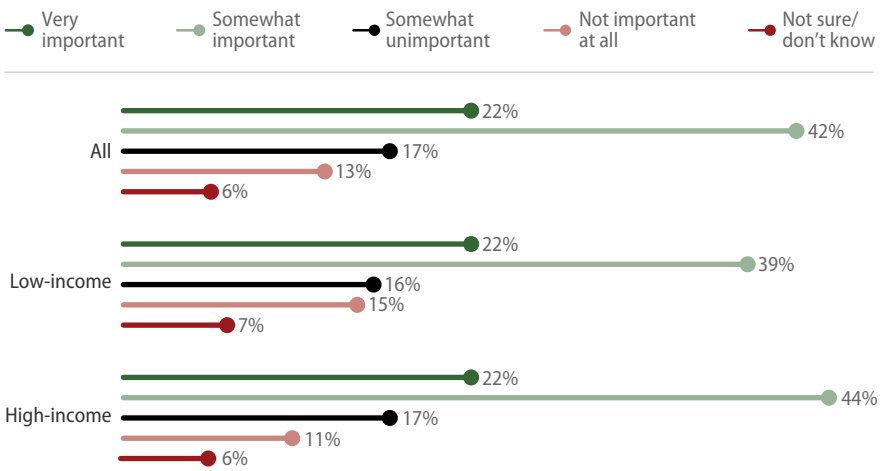
The authors looked for subpopulation differences in these responses in terms of income background. More specifically, the authors created two separate groups for low-income and high-income respondents, using an annual median household income threshold of $50,000. Respondents with household incomes below the $50,000 threshold were considered "low-income," and respondents with household incomes equal to or above this threshold were considered "high-income."

Counterintuitively, the survey responses among lower- and higher-income respondents were nearly identical. For instance, 22 percent of both low- and high-income Americans deem the issue of school segregation to be "very important" to them.

FIGURE 1

National attitudes toward school segregation, by income level

Responses to "How important is the issue of school segregation to you?"



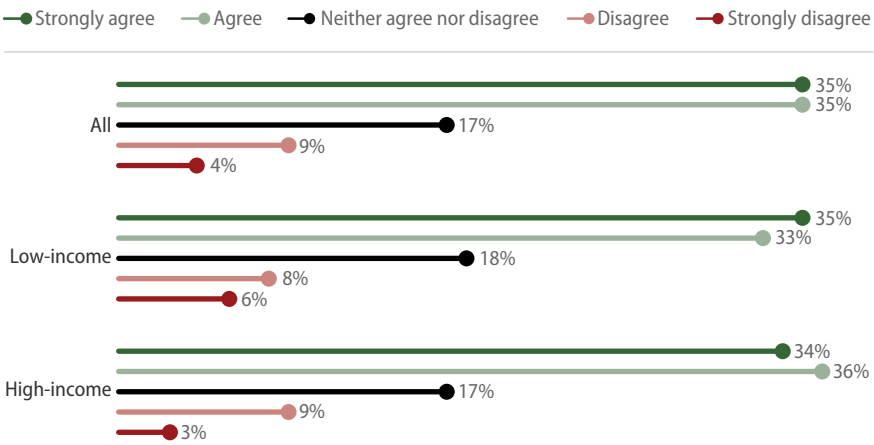
Note: Authors classified "low-income" and "high-income" survey respondents using an annual household income threshold of $45,000. Some apparent differences in estimates may not be statistically significant.

Source: Authors' analysis based on CAP survey administered in October 2016.

FIGURE 2

National attitudes toward school integration, by income level

Responses to "More should be done to integrate low- and high-poverty schools."



Note: Authors classified "low-income" and "high-income" survey respondents using an annual household income threshold of $45,000. Some apparent differences in estimates may not be statistically significant.

Source: Authors' analysis based on CAP survey administered in October 2016.

However, the authors did observe racial differences in attitudes. For instance, 49 percent of black respondents consider the issue of school segregation to be "very important" to them, compared to 26 percent of Hispanic respondents and 17 percent of non-Hispanic whites.

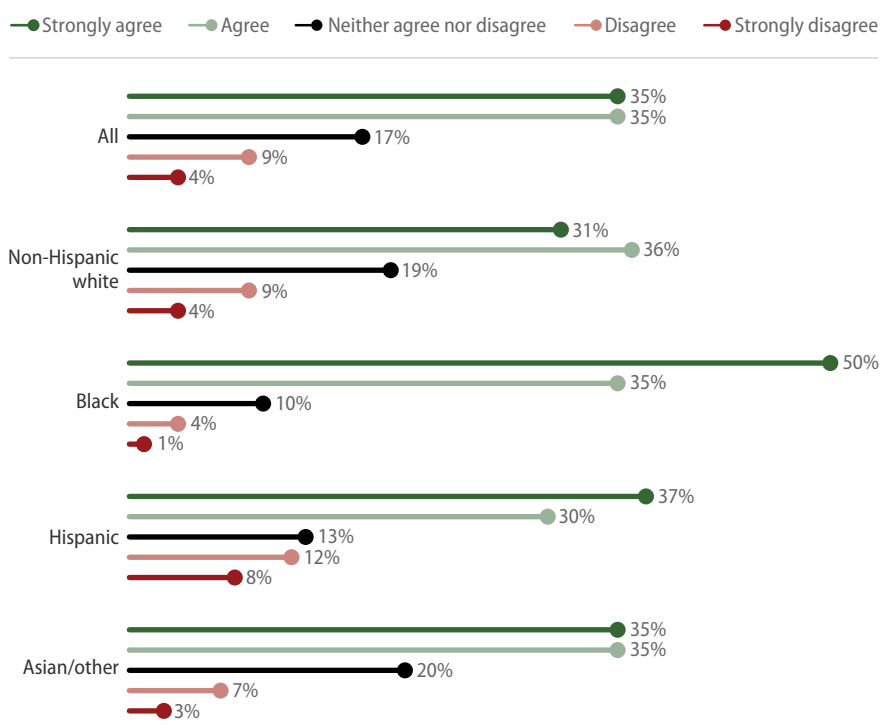
In addition, 85 percent of black respondents agree that more should be done to integrate low- and high-poverty schools, and 50 percent strongly agree that more should be done. On the other hand, 67 percent of both non-Hispanic whites and Hispanics agree that more should be done, and the white and Hispanic respondents who strongly agree with this notion are 31 percent and 37 percent, respectively.

Across all major subgroups, though, most supported the economic integration of schools.

FIGURE 3

National attitudes toward school integration, by race

Responses to "To what extent do you agree with the following: More should be done to integrate low- and high-poverty schools?"



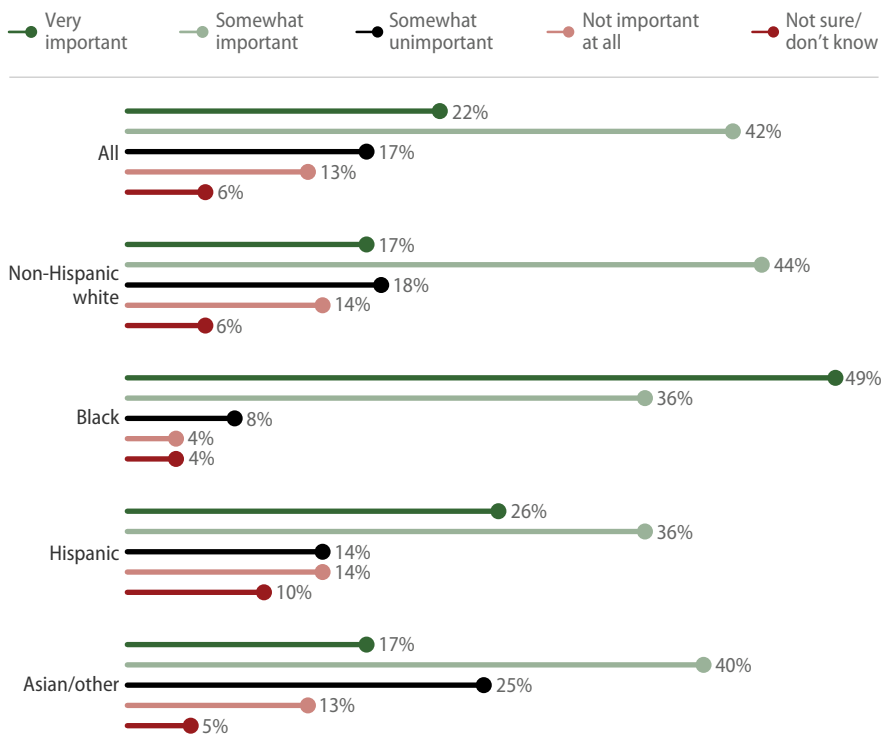
Note: Authors classified "non-Hispanic white," "black," "Hispanic," and "Asian/other" respondents based on respondents' answers to several survey questions regarding their race and ethnicity. Some apparent differences in estimates may not be statistically significant.

Source: Authors' analysis based on CAP survey administered in October 2016.

FIGURE 4

National attitudes toward school segregation, by race

Responses to "How important is the issue of school segregation to you?"



Note: Authors classified "non-Hispanic white," "black," "Hispanic," and "Asian/other" respondents based on respondents' answers to several survey questions regarding their race and ethnicity. Some apparent differences in estimates may not be statistically significant.

Source: Authors' analysis based on CAP survey administered in October 2016.

While parents value school diversity, they are skeptical of integration policies that limit parental choice or neglect the issue of quality

The authors conducted four focus group sessions with: white parents of low socioeconomic status; white parents of high socioeconomic status; African American and Latino parents of low socioeconomic status; and African American and Latino parents of high socioeconomic status. (Please see the Methodology section in the Appendix for more detail).

Participants across all racial and socioeconomic backgrounds spoke to the value of school diversity. Many lower-income parents felt that economic diversity would substantially improve their kids' quality of education. Among the lower-income whites, the expectation of additional resources going into an economically diverse school was an important factor.

Lower-income African American and Hispanic parents also held a conviction that their kids will need to work in a world with more affluent people. White, African American, and Hispanic higher-income parents valued income diversity in schools because they believed that kids benefited from exposure to "the real world" outside their own community.

However, parents expressed many doubts regarding the implementation of specific economic integration reforms, such as redrawing attendance zone boundaries. Many also called out busing specifically. One lower-income African American parent said, "It depends on how they will do it ... as long as my kid is not on the bus for two hours."

Overall, parents generally felt that increasing diversity was a noble idea. Higher-income African American and Hispanic parents were considerably more positive than any other group. Many of them believed that they had personally benefited from attending schools with white and higher-income students when they were young. After benefiting from diversity in their own schools—as students and later as parents—these participants wished the same opportunity for low-income students.

But parents were gravely concerned with issues of school quality, and they wanted economic integration efforts that supported their choice of a high-quality school. Specifically, they supported theme-based options such as technology-focused schools or dual-language schools that provided opportunities for students to master specific skills.

Many parents were also worried about the impact of economic integration on school climate, and several parents were worried about the bullying that could take place when mixing kids of different backgrounds. According to the survey, bullying was seen as something that would go in both directions: "rich kids bullying poor kids, and poor kids bullying rich kids." Focus group participants emphasized the importance of having school counselors who could work with students to ensure smooth transitions.

Interestingly, many members of the lower-income white group were resistant to increasing socioeconomic diversity. This was heavily driven by their own experience interacting with higher-income individuals. These participants spoke about attending mixed-income schools themselves, and being looked down upon by the "rich kids." As one participant put it: "They don't want us there, so why should we go there?"

TABLE 1

Parents' assessment of school integration policies

Summary of findings with focus group parents regarding socioeconomic integration

Ranking*	Integration policy	Policy description	Reception by parents	Relevant quotes from parents
1	Magnets and special programs	School district establishes new theme-based schools or creates special programs in existing schools for voluntary enrollment. Program themes can range from visual and performing arts to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education, dual language immersion, career pathways, and more.	Parents liked that this proposal focused on innovative programs and course offerings that could attract diverse families. Parents also liked that the policy measure was a voluntary integration plan.	"People are unified by the interest in a certain program. You get diversity this way." "The kids want to be at this school. This is what makes it successful." "I think it is a good thing—if you get in."
2	Expanded options in public school system	School district encourages parents to participate in a districtwide choice system, in which parents can submit applications and enter a lottery for their preferred public school(s) in the district.	Parents believed this policy would support their ability to enroll their child in a high-quality school. Lower-income parents believed this initiative would open doors to public schools currently not available to them.	"It is good to give kids choices." "You should choose where you want to go. Just like college."
3	Housing mobility	Government housing agencies enact policies to help low-income families move from poor, segregated neighborhoods into wealthier and more diverse areas. Housing agency may promote a "mixed-income housing" or "inclusionary zoning" policy, where developers are required to set aside a portion of new housing units for families with low income levels.	Parents were supportive of the idea but felt this policy presented greater implementation challenges than other initiatives.	"If you go to school with the upper class, you should live in the same environment. It does help to live in the same area as the school and not spend a long time getting there and back." "Great idea, but how do you keep it working long term?"
4	Attendance zone boundaries	School district redraws attendance zone boundaries to create more diverse schools. Catchment areas become larger or encompass a more heterogeneous mix of neighborhoods.	Most parents had strong reservations about this policy. Some parents noted that they moved to certain homes in order to be able to attend a local school, and this initiative undermined that decision.	"I don't want [it] to affect my property value." "Disrupts sense of community and moves kids from school to school. You want stability and friends over a long time."

* Rankings are based on parents' cumulative ratings of each policy initiative on a 10-point scale.

Source: Authors' analysis of focus group sessions conducted by CAP in October 2015.

Most Americans see economic segregation as an issue affecting low-income students, but not necessarily higher-income students

Americans recognize that economic school segregation is a serious problem, but they express sometimes nuanced and contradictory views about which students are affected.

In CAP's survey, respondents estimated the share of low-income students that attend low-, mid-, and high-poverty schools. The authors then compared the public beliefs against the actual evidence, according to federal data sources. (see Appendix)

According to the survey, Americans are aware that most students attend schools with peers of similar backgrounds. On average, respondents estimated that a little more than half—or 52 percent—of all low-income students attend high-poverty schools.[67] This estimate is slightly larger than the Urban Institute figure showing that 40 percent of all low-income students attend a high-poverty school.[68]

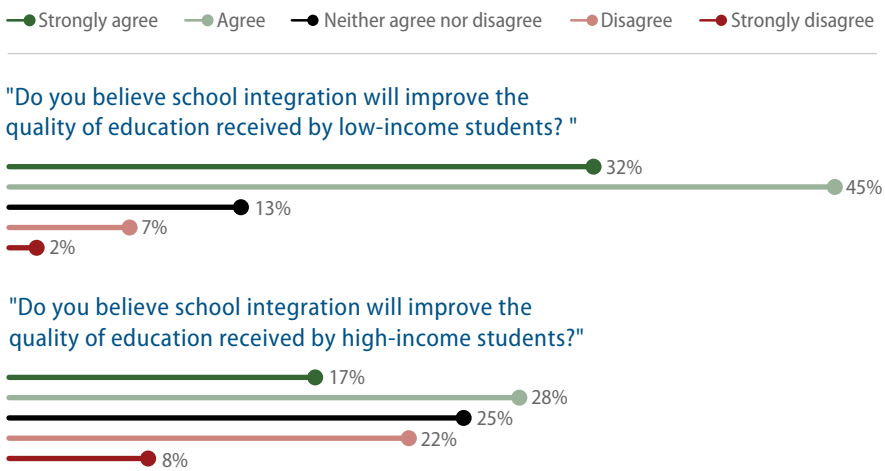
But while Americans are aware that concentrated poverty exists, they are less aware of how this affects the distribution of low-income students across low- and mid-poverty schools. For instance, according to the Urban Institute, just 6 percent of low-income students attend a low-poverty school, but the public estimates this figure to be around 17 percent.

These findings indicate that school segregation is much more complicated, nuanced, and pervasive than many Americans realize. On the whole, Americans believe low-income students are more likely to be in high-poverty schools than they really are, but they also think low-income students are more likely to be in low-poverty schools than the actual numbers indicate.

There is also little awareness of the universal benefits of school diversity. Most Americans assume that low-income students are the primary, if not sole, beneficiaries of economic integration policies. In CAP's survey, for instance, close to 80 percent of Americans agree that school integration will improve the quality of education received by low-income students, yet only 45 percent agree that integration will improve the quality of education received by high-income students. And 30 percent of the public "disagrees" or "strongly disagrees" with this notion.

FIGURE 5

National attitudes about school integration and school quality



Source: Authors' analysis based on CAP survey administered in October 2016.

While growing research shows that affluent students benefit from income diversity, most Americans are not aware of these shared benefits.

4 out of every 10 school districts experience intense economic segregation or isolation

EdBuild conducted a quantitative analysis of over 1,700 school districts to measure economic segregation within each district, or intradistrict segregation. Among the researchers' sample, 40 percent—or 688 districts—would be considered "hypersegregated" or "hyperisolated" by income. The authors call this group of districts the "Diversity Watch List."

In these 688 districts, most of their low-income students attend schools where at least 75 percent of their peers are also low-income, most of their higher-income students attend schools where at least 75 percent of their peers are also higher-income, and/or most of their schools have poverty rates that are at least 20 percentage points above or below the district average.

These districts enroll approximately 15 million students and 50 percent of students in the CAP sample. The authors also find that these districts tend to be larger—both geographically and in terms of student population—than other districts in the sample.

Although the sample is not well suited for estimating national trends, the sheer number of districts in the sample identified as segregated suggests that many districts experience intense economic segregation and isolation.

It is also important to note that these districts cover 49 out of 51 states and encompass regions stretching from the Deep South to the Midwest and Northeast. The urban nature of these districts also varies. Some districts are located in densely populated, urban areas—such as Baltimore City Public Schools in Maryland—while others are small, rural districts such as Knox County Public Schools in Kentucky. From this the authors conclude that school segregation in the 21st century is not a South, North, urban, suburban, or rural issue. It is a national issue.

The authors used three indices to measure different dynamics of economic school segregation: the Isolation of Poverty Index; the Isolation of Wealth Index; and the Hypersegregation Index.

TABLE 2

Segregation indices definitions

Index	Description	Method of calculation
Hypersegregation index	The proportion of schools with poverty rates that significantly vary from the district average	The share of schools with free and reduced-price lunch, or FRPL, eligibility rates that are 20 percentage points above or below the district rate
Isolation of poverty index	The concentration of low-income students in high-poverty schools	The share of FRPL-eligible students in schools with FRPL eligibility rates of 75 percent or higher
Isolation of wealth index	The concentration of high-income students in low-poverty schools	The share of non-FRPL-eligible students in schools with FRPL eligibility rates of 25 percent or lower

Note: Authors partnered with EdBuild to originate the three segregation indices and determine the methods of calculation.

Isolation of Poverty Index, Isolation of Wealth Index, and Hypersegregation Index

The Isolation of Poverty and Isolation of Wealth indices capture economic isolation in schools. In many districts, students in the area are either entirely low-income or entirely higher-income. Thus, these districts are highly segregated because they are economically isolated.

For instance, the Isolation of Wealth Index captures districts such as Kentucky's Oldham County Schools, which has a relatively low-poverty rate of 19 percent, is the wealthiest county in Kentucky, and is the 20th-wealthiest county in the country. For districts such as Oldham County to become more integrated, they would have to institute policies or programs that transfer students in or outside of their boundaries. Approximately 23 percent of districts among the authors' sample were identified as hyperisolated under the Isolation of Wealth Index.

On the other hand, the Isolation of Poverty Index captures districts that face high levels of poverty. Approximately 15 percent of districts among the sample were identified as hyperisolated under the Isolation of Poverty Index. Take, for example, Milwaukee Public Schools in Wisconsin, which has a poverty rate of 77 percent and an Isolation of Poverty Index score of .74. By this score, nearly three-quarters of Milwaukee's low-income students attend high-poverty schools.

Hypersegregation Index

The Hypersegregation Index calculates the share of schools in a district that have a poverty rate at least 20 percentage points above or below the district average.

It is important to note that in this analysis, the authors applied a number of exclusions in order to produce meaningful and accurate findings in the Hypersegregation Index. For instance, the authors excluded districts with poverty rates of less than 20 percent or more than 80 percent-- districts with extremely high or low rates can do very little to remedy segregation within their district boundaries.[69] The authors also excluded school districts with fewer than ten schools.

With these exclusions, the analysis excludes the vast majority of districts, but still accounts for nearly 60 percent of the total student population.

Approximately 6 percent of districts among the authors' sample—or 100 districts—were identified as hypersegregated under the Hypersegregation Index. Take, for example, Austin Independent School District in Texas, one of the most segregated schooling systems in the country. Austin Independent School District received a 0.77 on the Hypersegregation Index. This means that although the district, on average, has a poverty rate of 64 percent, more than three-quarters of the district's schools have a poverty rate that is either 84 percent and higher, or 44 percent and lower. Please see Appendix for a complete list of the hypersegregated districts from the study.

There are a few noteworthy findings from the Hypersegregation Index.

First, Texas and California are overrepresented in this list. Although it is worth looking more deeply into the causes of segregation in each of these respective states, it is important to note that both of these states have more—and in both cases many more—school districts than all other states in the country: California has 1,178 school districts and Texas has 1,265.

Second, the country's most segregated school districts are larger than the typical school district. The 50 most segregated districts among the authors' sample, for instance, enroll 41,000 students and operate 62 schools. Among the entire sample, these numbers are 16,000 and 27, respectively.

Hypersegregated districts also tend to be larger geographically. Some districts are so geographically large that they contain numerous cities, counties, and townships within their boundaries. Take, for example, Broward County Public Schools in Florida, the sixth largest school district in the nation. The authors identified Broward County as hypersegregated in the analysis, but the school district holds 31 municipalities, and diversifying its schools would require integration across 31 city and township lines.[70]

At the same time, the authors identified more than 100 nonsegregated school districts in their analysis. More specifically, in these districts:

1. There are no low-poverty or high-poverty schools
2. All schools are within 20 percentage points of the district's average poverty rate
3. No student attends a school where more than 75 percent of their peers have the same economic status as they do

These districts tend to be smaller, in terms of student enrollment and number of operational schools. On average, these districts operate 13 schools, enroll 6,000 students, and have a poverty rate of 48 percent. In addition, a disproportionate share of these districts are located in rural areas.

Please see Appendix for a complete list of the 100 nonsegregated school districts from the study.

A handful of districts have implemented promising policies and practices in economic integration

CAP's latest analysis shows that economic segregation still exists at high levels in the public schooling system. It is important to note, however, that the analysis may not capture more recent changes in enrollment patterns. The authors relied on data from the 2010-11 school year, and a handful of districts have since created new integration plans. For instance, the authors identified Denver Public Schools as hypersegregated in the analysis, but in recent years the district has introduced several reforms to diversify their schools.

Denver Public Schools now prioritizes seating at 20 low-poverty schools for low-income students, and it recently opened a comprehensive high school that reserves a third of available seats for students residing in high-poverty neighborhoods.[71] In 2012, Denver launched the first unified enrollment system for all traditional public and charter schools in the district. The district also redrew its attendance zone boundaries so that enrollment zones spanned neighborhoods of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.[72]

In addition, Denver Public Schools recently formed a partnership with the City of Denver to support affordable housing planning. A citywide committee, born out of this partnership, is developing policy recommendations for how Denver can diversify their neighborhoods and better integrate their schools.[73] Denver Public Schools has witnessed marginal improvements in school diversity since implementing these reforms.

Austin Independent School District has also taken major steps in recent years to desegregate their schools. For instance, the district is changing their recruitment and admissions policy for selective, application-based programs, to ensure these schools have a student body that is reflective of the district as a whole. The district is also working on a districtwide diversity plan that will look at strategies to address socioeconomic segregation. Overall, Austin Independent School District has taken these and many other steps to enhance diversity in their schools.[74]

Denver and Austin are not alone in this effort. Over the past decade, a growing number of school districts have implemented policies with the express purpose of integrating their schools by students' economic status. Some school districts choose to use one method of socioeconomic integration in isolation and others utilize a number of methods in combination.

Since 2007, the number of districts strongly committed to socioeconomic integration has more than doubled, from 40 to 100 nationwide.[75] These districts tend to be large and urban, and today, roughly 4 million students reside in a school district or charter school that considers socioeconomic status in their student assignment system—representing about 8 percent of total public school enrollment.[76]

The next section discusses the six distinct methods of socioeconomic integration that districts and schools most commonly use, and highlights district policy measures that fared extremely well on the authors' segregation indices. For example, Stamford Public Schools in Connecticut—which scored a zero on the Isolation of Poverty Index and a zero on the Isolation of Wealth Index—has created a requirement that all schools be within 10 percentage points of the district's average share of "educationally disadvantaged" students. [77] This reform has translated into strong achievement gains for both low- and high-income students in the district.[78]

Recent efforts to address school segregation

Magnet schools and special programs

School districts often consider improving both school diversity and school quality through programs with an innovative focus. These initiatives reduce economic isolation by offering specialized courses that appeal to families across a range of income levels.

Since the launch of school desegregation policies in the 1960s, magnet schools have demonstrated the effect of incentivizing voluntary integration, both in terms of socioeconomic status and race, among families. Implementation widely varies, but magnet schools typically offer a specialized, theme-based program. Some operate on the traditional goals of promoting diversity, while others are academically rigorous, selective, and competitive but do not have a clear commitment to diversity.

Implementation is key, and administrators of magnet schools and special programs must have a firm commitment to diversity. As an example, Burnsville-Eagan-Savage Independent School District in Minnesota prioritizes placement in magnet schools for low-income students. According to the authors' analysis, just 4 percent of Burnsville's schools significantly differ from the district's poverty rate by more than 20 percentage points.[79]

Overall, magnet schools have increasingly become a strong vehicle for achieving socioeconomic diversity in classrooms. To date, the magnet school sector has grown to about 4,000 schools across the nation.[80]

But it is not only magnet schools that can attract families from all along the socioeconomic spectrum: Charter and traditional public schools can also implement specialized programs that join students from diverse backgrounds. One increasingly popular focus among theme-based schools is the Montessori Method, a child-centered education approach that prioritizes the growth of the "whole child"—including their physical, mental, social, and emotional development.[81] There are currently more than 5,000 Montessori schools across the nation.

Growing research shows that Montessori schools create lasting, positive social effects.[82] Since the Montessori Method focuses on personal development, Montessori students improve in their social and emotional intelligence at a faster rate than students in traditional education.[83] In light of this finding, Montessori schools can be an important vehicle for integrating students of diverse backgrounds and fostering critical life and social skills needed for the 21st century.

For example, Wexford Montessori Magnet School in Lansing, Michigan, was initially a high-poverty, racially isolated school in the capital of Michigan. However, in the 2004-2005 school year, the school transitioned into a Montessori magnet school. By 2012, Wexford was well integrated: 44 percent of students were African American, 40 percent were white, 12 percent were Hispanic, and 4 percent fell in another racial category. As for results, Wexford students across all major racial and income subgroup categories have seen strong academic gains; they now outperform their peers statewide in reading and mathematics assessments.[84]

Other theme-based schools that have had success in attracting diverse student populations are schools focused on STEM—science, technology, engineering, and math—education and language immersion.[85]

Some school districts have also found success placing these themed schools in low-income neighborhoods. By locating special programs in under-resourced and underperforming schools, districts can ensure that existing students have access to a better quality education while also attracting families who may not have previously considered enrolling.

Diverse-by-design charter schools

Charter schools have greater autonomy than traditional public schools when it comes to programming, and they can appeal to families of different income levels through innovation in curriculum, teaching, and learning methods.

One advantage to charter school governance lies in how exactly they enroll students, and they are becoming a viable pathway to diversifying schools. More specifically, charter schools have greater flexibility than traditional public schools in their ability to enroll students from regions larger than traditional school attendance boundaries. The success of Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy, a regional charter school model in Rhode Island, provides a useful example.

Without being anchored by traditional school boundaries, the charter network pulls from all of northern Rhode Island. The schools have a very diverse student body while consistently ranking as some of the highest-performing schools in the state.[86]

Regional charter schools are a new, emerging model, and there have been a number of new schools promoting this approach as a way to promote diversity and school quality. For instance, York Academy Regional Charter School in York, Pennsylvania, is an International Baccalaureate candidate school that enrolls students from three neighboring school districts: the School District of the City of York, Central York School District, and York Suburban School District.[87]

Many charter leaders also argue that weighted student lotteries, which allocate an admissions preference to certain student groups in order to increase their likelihood of admittance, maintain a balance between low-income and higher-income students in a school population.[88] Blackstone Valley Prep, for example, reserves at least half of its seats for low-income students, ensuring its student body reflects the level of income diversity in northern Rhode Island.[89]

This intentional focus on socioeconomic mixing has made Blackstone's diversity goals come to full fruition. Blackstone Valley Prep's students represent a wide range of socioeconomic, racial, geographic, and cultural backgrounds. In the 2014-15 school year, 61 percent of students qualified for free or reduced-price lunch.[90] The student population is also roughly 48 percent Hispanic, 37 percent white, 11 percent African American, and 3 percent Asian. In addition, 10 percent of its students are English Language Learners while another 10 percent are identified as having a behavioral or learning disability.[91]

Importantly, the admissions policy is not the only source of diversity at Blackstone Valley Prep. Instruction is also culturally responsive to the students' identities and backgrounds. For instance, Blackstone Valley Prep includes required readings from racially and culturally diverse authors such as Carolivia Herron, to ensure the classroom learning experience reflects the varied histories and experiences of their students.[92] Parental involvement is also intentionally diverse, with some campuses requiring both an urban and suburban parent to collaboratively lead family councils.[93]

These policies have made a clear impact on student performance. In fact, the achievement gap has nearly closed in these schools,[94] and Blackstone Valley Prep now exceeds statewide averages on several performance indicators. Blackstone Valley Prep's low-income students also outperform the state's non-poor students on state standardized assessments.[95] Blackstone Valley Prep hopes to scale its success and expand to seven schools by 2017.[96]

"By engaging our community in conversations across our differences, leveraging culturally responsive instruction, and educating children side by side in the same classrooms, we believe we are laying the foundation for a more just society."

—Jeremy Chiappetta, executive director of Blackstone Valley Prep

Charter schools are hardly a panacea when it comes to diversity, however, and current studies on the effects of the charter school sector on segregation have been mixed. One study by Duke University found that more than two-thirds of charter school students receive their education in intensely segregated settings.[97] Similar research suggests that expanding charter schools may contribute to increased segregation without focused policy changes. As education experts Richard Kahlenberg and Halley Potter argue, school policies in recruitment, location, and transportation can either mitigate or drive charter school segregation.[98] Some charters, for example, may be highly committed to diversity, but do not have much room to diversify because they are located in homogenous neighborhoods.

Still, charters can foster greater school diversity. For instance, High Tech High—a high-performing charter school network in San Diego County, California—offers an intensive, specialized focus on STEM, and all 13 High Tech schools are highly diverse. What is key is a given school or network's commitment to student diversity, as well as the local demographics.

Controlled school choice

Another recent reform is carefully designed school choice programs, or controlled choice, which allow parents to choose their child's school while also accounting for socioeconomic diversity.

Controlled choice eliminates the default assignment of a neighborhood school in a district, removes traditional school attendance boundaries, and creates larger zones or catchment areas within the district. Parents can then select their favored schools through rank-order preference, but to ensure diversity, the district operates a weighted lottery system and reserves a share of seats in each school for low-income students.

A small number of districts are implementing such policies, but the most notable example is Cambridge, Massachusetts. Cambridge Public Schools pioneered this model in 1980 with the intent of racial desegregation. In 2001, however, the district reshaped their goals toward socioeconomic diversity due to the increasing number of court decisions prohibiting the voluntary use of race in school admissions. The district now reserves a share of seats at each school for low-income students, as measured by a student's free or reduced-price lunch eligibility.[99]

Cambridge's controlled choice plan has been largely successful. In fact, Cambridge Public Schools received a zero on both the Isolation of Poverty Index and the Isolation of Wealth Index, meaning none of the district's students attend a school where at least 75 percent of their peers have the same economic status as they do.[100] Students in Cambridge also outperform their peers in neighboring districts on standardized assessments.[101]

Berkeley Unified School District in Berkeley, California, is another strong example of an effective controlled choice system. Although Berkeley's student assignment plan allows parents to rank-order their first-choice, second-choice, and third-choice schools, it considers a number of factors in the actual assignment process, including the parent's level of education, income, and primary language spoken at home. The district is also divided into three large elementary school zones. Using these zones, the parents' stated preferences, and their diversity factors, Berkeley Unified assigns its roughly 10,000 students to schools in a way that ensures students from all socioeconomic zones are evenly represented in each school. This policy has created a remarkably high degree of student integration and could serve as a model for other interested districts.[102]

Berkeley Unified has a Hypersegregation Index score of 0, meaning not a single school in the district deviates from the district's poverty rate by more than 20 percentage points. This is remarkable considering that some of the districts on the list of hypersegregated school districts have similar poverty rates as Berkeley Unified. Furthermore, Berkeley Unified does not operate any school with a poverty rate below 25 percent or above 75 percent, meaning its Isolation of Poverty Index and Isolation of Wealth Index scores are both zero.

Berkeley Unified demonstrates the success of controlled choice, but like so many education programs, implementation is key. Without high-quality roll out, choice programs may actually heighten economic and racial isolation. Some choice systems operate on a "first come, first served" basis, for instance, and

affluent families are often better able to complete the application on time. This has become a growing challenge in San Francisco's choice program,[103] as affluent families are more likely to place in the higher-quality schools while low-income families are left with the lower-quality options.

However, controlled choice plans maintain parental choice without undermining the broader goals of school diversity.

Attendance zone boundaries

Although the practice of zoning children within the boundaries of socioeconomic status has largely been accepted as the status quo, there are other options for assigning students to schools. Starting with La Crosse, Wisconsin, in 1979, a handful of school districts across the country have rejected traditional school boundaries and instead have created boundaries that encourage diverse schools.[104]

For example, Stamford Public Schools in Connecticut, draws its attendance zone boundaries so that all schools are within 10 percentage points of the district's average share of "educationally disadvantaged" students. The district identifies students as educationally disadvantaged if they qualify for free- or reduced-price lunch, live in public housing, or are English Language Learners. The district also has a strong magnet program and a weighted lottery system to achieve its diversity goals.[105]

Stamford Public Schools scored a zero on the Isolation of Poverty Index and a zero on the Isolation of Wealth Index, meaning not a single student attends a school where 75 percent of their peers are of similar income background.

Housing reforms

To reduce residential, and thereby school, segregation, government housing agencies are increasingly promoting mixed-income housing. These developments provide affordable housing units for families across a range of income levels.

Inclusionary zoning is also increasingly popular, and this policy requires real estate developers to set aside some portion of their housing developments at below-market value. Local public housing authorities can then purchase and rent these homes as public housing units to eligible low-income families via a lottery system.[106]

Inclusionary zoning offers low-income families an opportunity to reside in traditionally affluent neighborhoods and have their children attend low-poverty schools. In the long run, these housing policies provide long-lasting benefits to the student, family, and greater community.

Additionally, growing research shows that inclusionary zoning can meaningfully improve the educational outcomes of at-risk, low-income students over the long term. In fact, one study found that this housing policy yields stronger outcomes among low-income children than any school-level reform.[107]

Perhaps the most salient example takes place in Montgomery County, Maryland. The local public housing authority in Montgomery County purchases up to 40 percent of inclusionary zoning homes and operates them as subsidized public housing, making it one of the largest inclusionary zoning programs in the country.[108]

Through a random assignment lottery system, low-income families occupy the public housing apartments, which are scattered-site units across the county.[109] Families at or below the poverty line can apply for the program and are randomly selected to live in these subsidized homes. Since 1976, Montgomery County has created 13,000 inclusionary housing units. [110]

In 2010, researcher Heather Schwartz published a longitudinal study of about 850 students who resided in these units, and found that by the end of elementary school, the achievement gap between low-income children who resided in these inclusionary homes and their high-income peers nearly closed.[111]

Schwartz's study also found that between 2001 and 2007, low-income children who resided in the inclusionary homes saw significantly greater gains than low-income children who remained in segregated neighborhoods.[112] The academic gains persisted for several years after the students' initial migration. The success of the program is based in part because inclusionary zoning allows for greater residential stability among low-income families, which in turn increases student achievement.

Since 1972, inclusionary zoning ordinances have spread to more than 300 jurisdictions across the nation, including in California, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, New Mexico, Colorado, and Vermont.[113] Inclusionary zoning has also become popular in metropolitan areas such as San Francisco, California, and Washington, D.C.[114]

School turnaround

A new and less common approach to economic integration has been school turnaround. New York state has been a pioneer in this regard. In late 2014, the state launched a first-of-its-kind desegregation plan—the Socioeconomic Integration Pilot program—using federal School Improvement Grant, or SIG, funds. Then New York State Education Commissioner John King spearheaded the three-year pilot program, which grants 25 schools up to $1.25 million each for the planning and implementation of school diversity plans.

Significantly, the New York's Socioeconomic Integration Pilot program requires schools to specialize their focus to appeal to middle-class families. Eligible schools can choose from a broad array of options, including dual language, STEM, visual and performing arts, Montessori, and career-themed pathways.[115] Although implementation is just now under way, New York has set an important precedent in the use of state funds for economic integration purposes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings presented in this report, CAP offers a series of recommendations for policymakers at the federal, state, and district level to facilitate the goal of making public schools more socioeconomically diverse.

Below are CAP's recommendations.

What the federal government should do

- **Expand federal funding for school economic integration strategies.** The U.S. Department of Education should establish a new competitive grant to encourage more economically diverse districts. This grant program should give priority to local districts that are developing innovative, voluntary approaches to school economic integration and are including community engagement as a key part of their strategies. Department of Education has already taken actionable steps to incentivize school diversity through its Investing in Innovation, or I3, Magnet School Assistance Program, and Charter School Program grant competitions.[116]

  The federal approach should also go beyond education. For instance, members of Congress can appropriate additional funds for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's, or HUD's, homeownership voucher program and expand income and eligibility requirements for low-income families. HUD can also provide grants to state housing departments to expand housing programs that ultimately result in more low-income students attending low-poverty schools.

- **Promote economic integration as a school improvement strategy.** In the Every Student Succeeds Act, states are required to set aside at least 7 percent of their Title I funds for school improvement purposes. The Department of Education should encourage the transformation of low-performing, segregated schools into high-performing, diverse schools. CAP believes that high-poverty schools would see greater increases in school performance if increased student diversity was a school improvement objective.

- **Incentivize or require states to track and report patterns of school segregation.** The Department of Education can create incentives, guidelines, and/or requirements for states to track and collect longitudinal data regarding student demographics and enrollment patterns. The Department of Education should require states to report these data in a way that informs strategies to diversify their schools.

  For example, the department can require each state to submit an annual report detailing the racial, ethnic, and economic makeup of each of its schools and districts, and how these demographics have shifted over time. This information should be shared publicly. Once it has this information for each state, the federal government could both support states in their efforts to diversify their schools and also penalize states that do not make progress toward school diversity.

  In addition, due to a recent Community Eligibility Provision, or CEP, reporting option, high-poverty schools and school districts that are eligible for CEP are not required to report the percentages of students who would individually be eligible for free- and reduced-price lunch meals.[117] The Department of Education should amend this provision by requiring districts and schools who may be eligible for CEP to still report the income composition of their individual schools.

  The department should also consider devising a new measure of poverty. Most education stakeholders rely on students' eligibility for free- or reduced-price lunch as an indicator of poverty, but some districts also consider other factors such as homelessness, residence in foster care, or eligibility for supplementary nutrition assistance.

What states should do

- **Incentivize the creation of high-performing, diverse-by-design schools.** There are many different types of schools—magnets, charters, and charter school networks—with a proven track record in improving school diversity, and states should encourage their proliferation. States should have dedicated funding streams that support high-performing, diverse-by-design schools.

  New York state's Socioeconomic Integration Pilot Program, for example, provides grants of up to $1.25 million to schools that use socioeconomic integration to increase student performance in the state's lowest performing schools.[118] Also, states can incentivize charter school diversity through competitive grant programs such as the Charter Schools Program State Educational Agencies competition.[119]

- **Support housing developing to foster more economic integration.** States can foster economic integration by funding mixed-income housing development projects. State housing agencies can also work with state education departments in placing these housing developments in high-performing school districts.

  States should also promote inclusionary zoning policies, which provide affordable, subsidized housing units in scattered locations across wealthy neighborhood properties. As discussed, Montgomery County, Maryland—which provides thousands of subsidized homes for low-income families—is a noteworthy model.[120]

  State governments should also outlaw policies and practices that exclude low-income families from wealthy developments. Local municipalities tend to impose strict requirements—such as on land use, building codes, number of residents, minimum lot sizes, and more—to deter low-income, multigenerational families from living in affluent suburban areas.[121] States should prohibit against such exclusionary measures.

- **Encourage regional enrollment schools.** State legislatures should create laws and policies that not only allow but also incentivize schools to enroll students from several municipal boundaries. One way to do this is for states to authorize the development of regional charters, which enroll students from geographic areas beyond traditional school district boundaries. Following in the footsteps of states such as Rhode Island, this authorization should permit establishment and operation of a regional charter school by a school district, independent nonprofit organization, higher education institution, mayor, or local elected official.

- **Equalize funding across and within districts.** Some states have highly inequitable funding systems. Illinois, for instance, is known to have one of the worst funding discrepancies of any state, with low-income students receiving only 81 cents to every dollar spent on educating higher-income students.[122]

  Inequitable funding systems in Illinois and other states promote economic segregation by making local areas overly dependent on local funding for schools. Because student funding in these states is so dependent upon neighborhood wealth, school districts are incentivized to create boundaries that exclude lower-income neighborhoods. States should equalize funding across economically disparate districts in order to mitigate these perverse incentives.

Fiscal inequities also persist within school districts. In a school district, the better-resourced schools tend to serve high-income populations in affluent communities, and the under-funded schools tend to serve low-income populations in disadvantaged communities. States should equalize funding across all schools within a district to minimize this relationship.

- **Track and report patterns of school segregation.** States should track and collect longitudinal data regarding student demographics and enrollment patterns, and report this data in a way that informs strategies to diversify their districts and schools. As it stands now, not a single state publishes annual reports on the levels of income diversity and segregation within their schools and districts. This kind of information would enable school districts to: 1) thoughtfully address segregation issues, 2) allow schools to purposefully locate in areas that need more diverse schools, and 3) hold states publicly accountable for their effort (or lack of it) toward economic integration.

What districts should do

- **Include local parents in economic integration plans and provide specialized programs that appeal to a range of families.** CAP's focus group research shows that parents do not want economic integration policies to be a mandate. Before embarking on an economic integration plan, districts should include parents during the planning stages as a way to build trust and create buy-in. Districts should regularly consult racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse parents to review progress on their economic integration plans and implementation efforts.

  Districts should also utilize parental involvement events, for example, back-to-school nights or parent coalition meetings, as spaces to explain or sell the benefits of school diversity. One of the biggest barriers to integration is parent opposition, but strong communications and messaging efforts can hurdle these barriers.

  Districts should also focus on methods of socioeconomic integration that increase the availability of special programs and improve school quality. When the authors polled the parent focus groups to see which methods of socioeconomic integration appeal most to them, parents voiced the greatest support for special programs. They liked that the approach incentivizes families to make changes on their own, and "opt in" to diversity. They also appreciated that fact that the policy would not force their children to change schools.

Parents voiced particular enthusiasm for technology-themed schools and dual-language immersion programs, and districts should consider placing these theme-based programs in low-income and underperforming schools. This strategy would attract high-income families to schools that they may not have previously considered. However, districts should ensure this approach does not displace currently enrolled students who come from low-income backgrounds or who have a lower record of achievement.

- **Implement controlled choice programs.** Districts must consider socioeconomic status in their student assignment and enrollment procedures. It is simply insufficient to assign children to schools based solely on where they live; for decades, that type of assignment system has perpetuated both school segregation and racial and income achievement gaps. One of the most effective diversity strategies is a lottery system that assigns students to schools but gives preferences or "weights" to low-income students.

  During the assignment process, administrators should account for parents' preferences as well as their socioeconomic status, including their level of education, income level, and primary language spoken in the home. Each school year, the district should monitor school diversity as neighborhood demographics shift over time.

  These controlled choice programs create diverse schools while also giving parents a say in where their children attend school. Successful and sustainable controlled choice programs ensure that children attend one of their parents' top choices, because all parents must submit a rank-order preference. Cambridge, Massachusetts, for example, has successfully used a controlled choice program to create high-performing diverse schools since 1981.[123]

- **Allow and encourage interdistrict and intradistrict transfers.** Apart from controlled choice programs, districts can also consider interdistrict and intradistrict transfers as a viable method of school choice. Under this plan, parents can enroll their children in another school or district, other than the one they were originally assigned, given space availability.

  Districts should require that schools honor parental preference without displacing other currently enrolled students. Hartford, Connecticut, has significantly reduced economic segregation in its schools through a strategic system of student transfers called Open Choice.[124]

- **Create inclusionary zoning.** Fundamentally, public schools are segregated because residential neighborhoods are segregated. As discussed above, creating neighborhood communities that reflect the demographics of the country is a critical step toward economic diversity. Inclusionary zoning policies that require the creation of affordable housing in higher-income neighborhoods help to create more integrated neighborhoods and, ultimately, schools.

- **Redraw attendance zone boundaries to ensure neighborhood schools draw from an economically diverse student population.** Districts should shift away from the traditional notion of a neighborhood school and redraw attendance zone boundaries so that they transcend neighborhood lines. As detailed in this report, Berkeley Unified School District in California has created a district of high-performing diverse schools using this approach. However, this is a less popular approach among parents compared to expanded school options and special programs.

  Also, if districts need to create new schools to accommodate a growing population, they should be strategic in locating these schools in areas nested between low- and high-income neighborhoods and ensuring that student attendance policies work to create diversity at those schools.

- **Fund capacity building for diverse schools.** Integrated schools need support. It is not enough for these schools to simply enroll an economically diverse group of students. In fact, having a diverse student body is just the first step in creating a successful, diverse school community. While data may show economic integration at the school level, segregation can still take place at the classroom level due to tracking or differences in treatment, supports, and services students receive.

  Diverse-by-design charter school networks, such as Citizens of the World Charter Schools,[125] have found that it takes intentional work from network and school leaders, as well as classroom teachers, to develop a school curriculum and culture that meet the needs of a culturally and economically diverse student body.

  Districts should invest in the development of successful learning models for diverse schools, including professional development for school personnel that empowers them to address students' socioemotional needs and create inclusive school communities. Districts should also consider hiring additional counselors and school climate coordinators, who can develop strategies to promote a positive school climate among a racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse student body.

Conclusion

The economic and racial makeup of most classrooms today fail to reflect the rapidly changing demographics of the nation. Although the United States is growing increasingly diverse, the diversity of its public classrooms remains stagnant.

The authors believe that the cultural divides permeating this country can be alleviated if students are educated in socioeconomically diverse schools. Yet, in many ways, school integration continues to be a policy that nearly everyone supports but almost no one is pursuing. As detailed in this report, there are school districts that have proved socioeconomic integration is possible; therefore, creating integrated schools is more so a matter of will, rather than one of viability.

Although the U.S. Supreme Court found more than 60 years ago that segregated schools are inherently unequal, this principle has proven to be an insufficient motivation for school, district, state, and federal leaders to prioritize this issue. And the decades of research demonstrating the substantial benefits of school diversity have also proven insufficient to move most leaders to act.

It is past time for education leaders to act on integration. School economic integration presents one of the most viable solutions to the inequities ripping at the fabric of the nation. CAP's hope is that this report will provide clear data and next steps that support an increase in school diversity and, ultimately, educational equity.

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Appendix

TABLE 3

Hypersegregated school districts

List of public school districts in authors' sample identified as hypersegregated in hypersegregation index, in alphabetical order

School District	State	Urbanicity	Hypersegregation index score	Isolation of poverty index score	Isolation of wealth index score
Huntsville City	Alabama	City	64%	55%	51%
Montgomery County	Alabama	City	56%	64%	26%
Anchorage	Alaska	City	61%	19%	41%
Mesa Unified	Arizona	City	51%	42%	29%
Fort Smith	Arkansas	City	60%	66%	0%
Little Rock	Arkansas	City	60%	69%	16%
North Little Rock	Arkansas	City	74%	52%	0%
ABC Unified	California	City	57%	26%	42%
Alameda Unified	California	Suburb	53%	0%	65%
East Side Union High	California	City	56%	7%	41%
Gateway Unified	California	Suburb	63%	32%	48%
Glendale Unified	California	City	68%	35%	54%
Lakeside Union Elementary	California	Suburb	54%	17%	17%
Long Beach Unified	California	City	58%	60%	10%
Monterey Peninsula Unified	California	Suburb	58%	42%	18%
Mountain Empire Unified	California	Rural	62%	19%	45%
Mt. Diablo Unified	California	Suburb	65%	39%	56%
Newport-Mesa Unified	California	City	64%	39%	49%
Orange Unified	California	City	78%	26%	61%
Pajaro Valley Unified	California	City	60%	88%	37%
Sacramento City Unified	California	City	57%	56%	11%
San Diego Unified	California	City	53%	59%	19%
San Jose Unified	California	City	59%	30%	43%
San Juan Unified	California	Suburb	58%	28%	44%
San Marcos Unified	California	City	53%	29%	43%
Tustin Unified	California	City	74%	40%	78%
Vista Unified	California	Suburb	58%	41%	28%
Denver Public Schools	Colorado	City	57%	74%	22%

continues

School District	State	Urbanicity	Hypersegregation index score	Isolation of poverty index score	Isolation of wealth index score
Weld County School District Six	Colorado	City	58%	45%	30%
Red Clay Consolidated	Delaware	Suburb	64%	36%	29%
Broward County Public Schools	Florida	Suburb	58%	35%	27%
Collier	Florida	Suburb	62%	46%	23%
Duval County Public Schools	Florida	City	51%	31%	20%
Hillsborough	Florida	Suburb	59%	44%	26%
Leon	Florida	City	74%	43%	65%
Orange	Florida	Suburb	53%	40%	10%
Palm Beach	Florida	Suburb	61%	37%	35%
Pasco	Florida	Suburb	57%	29%	11%
Walton County	Florida	Rural	56%	19%	3%
Chatham County	Georgia	City	52%	42%	13%
Cobb County	Georgia	Suburb	65%	39%	55%
Fulton County	Georgia	Suburb	77%	48%	67%
Gwinnett County Public Schools	Georgia	Suburb	51%	41%	26%
Muscogee County	Georgia	City	64%	63%	17%
Community Unit School District 300	Illinois	Suburb	52%	43%	68%
U-46	Illinois	Suburb	63%	36%	24%
New Albany-Floyd County Consolidated	Indiana	Suburb	64%	17%	59%
Bowling Green Independent	Kentucky	City	57%	36%	37%
Jefferson County	Kentucky	City	55%	51%	16%
Caddo Parish	Louisiana	City	63%	59%	21%
Baltimore County Public Schools	Maryland	Suburb	52%	11%	38%
Dearborn City	Michigan	City	65%	54%	0%
Minneapolis Public Schools	Minnesota	City	64%	61%	25%
Osseo Public	Minnesota	Suburb	58%	20%	53%
Gulfport	Mississippi	City	60%	50%	0%
Madison County	Mississippi	Rural	65%	35%	76%
Springfield R-12	Missouri	City	57%	33%	32%
Lincoln Public Schools	Nebraska	City	53%	24%	48%
North Platte Public Schools	Nebraska	Town	54%	0%	18%
Clark County	Nevada	Suburb	56%	38%	22%
Elko County	Nevada	Town	53%	12%	57%
Washoe County	Nevada	City	62%	43%	41%
Nashua	New Hampshire	City	53%	15%	34%
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	North Carolina	City	64%	46%	39%

continues

School District	State	Urbanicity	Hypersegregation index score	Isolation of poverty index score	Isolation of wealth index score
Guilford County Schools	North Carolina	City	50%	34%	24%
Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools	North Carolina	City	63%	42%	32%
Cincinnati City	Ohio	City	74%	76%	58%
Union	Oklahoma	City	59%	38%	6%
Portland Public Schools	Oregon	City	66%	46%	46%
Hazleton Area	Pennsylvania	Suburb	70%	48%	0%
Charleston	South Carolina	City	79%	53%	55%
Meade 46-1	South Dakota	Rural	55%	0%	5%
Sioux Falls 49-5	South Dakota	City	54%	23%	37%
Davidson County	Tennessee	City	51%	51%	19%
Shelby County	Tennessee	Suburb	53%	16%	64%
Amarillo Independent	Texas	City	57%	62%	37%
Arlington Independent	Texas	City	54%	52%	21%
Austin Independent	Texas	City	77%	71%	44%
Beaumont Independent	Texas	City	56%	65%	10%
Brazosport Independent	Texas	Suburb	61%	39%	0%
Conroe Independent	Texas	Suburb	60%	28%	59%
Corpus Christi Independent	Texas	City	53%	59%	8%
Cypress-Fairbanks Independent	Texas	Suburb	53%	19%	40%
Fort Bend Independent	Texas	Suburb	58%	14%	55%
Katy Independent	Texas	Suburb	62%	4%	67%
Lamar Consolidated Independent	Texas	Suburb	66%	48%	33%
Lewisville Independent	Texas	Suburb	52%	23%	73%
Lubbock Independent	Texas	City	59%	58%	12%
North East Independent	Texas	City	65%	36%	53%
Richardson Independent	Texas	City	52%	39%	15%
Rio Grande City Consolidated Independent	Texas	Town	100%	32%	77%
Spring Branch Independent	Texas	City	77%	66%	48%
Tyler Independent	Texas	City	68%	65%	0%
Salt Lake City	Utah	City	69%	57%	28%
San Juan District	Utah	Rural	67%	48%	5%
Henrico County Public Schools	Virginia	Suburb	59%	11%	53%
Prince William County Public Schools	Virginia	Suburb	52%	7%	55%
Pasco	Washington	City	71%	53%	0%
Seattle Public Schools	Washington	City	64%	25%	42%

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics, "Common Core of Data: 2011-12 Local Educational Agency (School District) Universe Survey Data File and Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey Data File," available at https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/pubschuniv.asp (last accessed October 2016).

TABLE 4

Nonsegregated school districts

List of districts in authors' sample that received perfect scores across all three segregation indices

School district	State	Urbanicity	Poverty rate	Hypersegregation index score	Isolation of poverty index score	Isolation of wealth index score
Amador County Unified	California	Town	40%	0	0	0
Armstrong	Pennsylvania	Town	41%	0	0	0
Azle Independent	Texas	Suburb	47%	0	0	0
Barren County	Kentucky	Town	56%	0	0	0
Barrow County	Georgia	Rural	61%	0	0	0
Bayonne Board of Education	New Jersey	Suburb	58%	0	0	0
Beauregard Parish School Board	Louisiana	Rural	51%	0	0	0
Beaver Dam Unified	Wisconsin	Town	46%	0	0	0
Belton 124	Missouri	Suburb	51%	0	0	0
Berkeley Unified	California	City	44%	0	0	0
Bibb County	Alabama	Rural	63%	0	0	0
Blount County	Alabama	Rural	53%	0	0	0
Bremerton	Washington	City	61%	0	0	0
Bristol Township	Pennsylvania	Suburb	48%	0	0	0
Cadillac Area Public Schools	Michigan	Town	56%	0	0	0
Cambridge-Isanti	Minnesota	Town	35%	0	0	0
Camden County	Georgia	Rural	46%	0	0	0
Capital	Delaware	City	59%	0	0	0
Carroll County Public Schools	Virginia	Rural	50%	0	0	0
Charter Oak Unified	California	Suburb	41%	0	0	0
Chilton County	Alabama	Rural	59%	0	0	0
Cloquet Public School	Minnesota	Town	38%	0	0	0
Copperas Cove Independent	Texas	Suburb	48%	0	0	0
Detroit Lakes Public	Minnesota	Town	37%	0	0	0
East Stroudsburg Area	Pennsylvania	Rural	45%	0	0	0
Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Public Schools	North Carolina	Rural	56%	0	0	0
Elmore County Public	Alabama	Town	47%	0	0	0
Fall Mountain Regional	New Hampshire	Rural	36%	0	0	0
Fall River Joint Unified	California	Rural	55%	0	0	0
Faribault Public	Minnesota	Town	51%	0	0	0
Farmington R-VII	Missouri	Town	51%	0	0	0
Franklin County	Kentucky	Town	49%	0	0	0

continues

School district	State	Urbanicity	Poverty rate	Hypersegregation index score	Isolation of poverty index score	Isolation of wealth index score
Fremont County Joint	Idaho	Town	49%	0	0	0
Gordon County	Georgia	Rural	62%	0	0	0
Goshen County	Wyoming	Rural	52%	0	0	0
Grand Rapids Public	Minnesota	Town	38%	0	0	0
Halifax County Schools	North Carolina	Rural	42%	0	0	0
Hampshire County Schools	West Virginia	Rural	58%	0	0	0
Hancock County Schools	West Virginia	City	49%	0	0	0
Haywood County Schools	North Carolina	Suburb	52%	0	0	0
Huber Heights City	Ohio	Suburb	40%	0	0	0
Humboldt Unified	Arizona	Rural	56%	0	0	0
Jackson County	Mississippi	Rural	54%	0	0	0
Jefferson County	Tennessee	Rural	58%	0	0	0
Jessamine County	Kentucky	Rural	51%	0	0	0
Jones County	Georgia	Rural	44%	0	0	0
Kettering City	Ohio	Suburb	38%	0	0	0
Lakeland	Idaho	Rural	47%	0	0	0
Lee County Public Schools	Virginia	Rural	57%	0	0	0
Lewiston Independent	Idaho	City	37%	0	0	0
Liberty County	Georgia	City	63%	0	0	0
Little Elm Independent	Texas	Town	43%	0	0	0
Metropolitan School District Martinsville Schools	Indiana	Town	47%	0	0	0
Madison	Idaho	Town	39%	0	0	0
Marion County	Tennessee	Rural	66%	0	0	0
Mecklenburg County Public Schools	Virginia	Rural	58%	0	0	0
Meramec Valley R-III	Missouri	Town	46%	0	0	0
Moorhead Area Public	Minnesota	Suburb	38%	0	0	0
Mt. Pleasant City	Michigan	Town	34%	0	0	0
Muhlenberg County	Kentucky	Rural	57%	0	0	0
Mustang Public Schools	Oklahoma	Suburb	34%	0	0	0
Naugatuck	Connecticut	Suburb	39%	0	0	0
Nicholas County Schools	West Virginia	Rural	55%	0	0	0
Niles Community Schools	Michigan	City	47%	0	0	0
North Lawrence Community Schools	Indiana	Rural	45%	0	0	0
Northwest R-I	Missouri	Rural	41%	0	0	0

continues

School district	State	Urbanicity	Poverty rate	Hypersegregation index score	Isolation of poverty index score	Isolation of wealth index score
Oak Harbor	Washington	Town	40%	0	0	0
Owatonna Public	Minnesota	Town	34%	0	0	0
Pemberton Township Schools	New Jersey	Rural	50%	0	0	0
Pennsauken Township Board of Education	New Jersey	Suburb	62%	0	0	0
Plain Local	Ohio	Suburb	42%	0	0	0
Pocono Mountain	Pennsylvania	Rural	43%	0	0	0
Port Angeles	Washington	Town	48%	0	0	0
Portage Township Schools	Indiana	Suburb	53%	0	0	0
Preston County Schools	West Virginia	Rural	49%	0	0	0
Redford Union Schools District No. 1	Michigan	Suburb	61%	0	0	0
Regional School Unit 02	Maine	Rural	41%	0	0	0
Regional School Unit 20	Maine	Rural	56%	0	0	0
Russell County Public Schools	Virginia	Rural	52%	0	0	0
San Antonio Independent	Texas	City	42%	0	0	0
Sevier	Utah	Rural	53%	0	0	0
Shenandoah County Public Schools	Virginia	Town	39%	0	0	0
Smith County	Tennessee	Rural	57%	0	0	0
Smyth County Public Schools	Virginia	Town	56%	0	0	0
Southgate Community	Michigan	Suburb	47%	0	0	0
Spartanburg 01	South Carolina	Rural	52%	0	0	0
Spartanburg 05	South Carolina	Suburb	49%	0	0	0
St. Louis County	Minnesota	Rural	47%	0	0	0
St. Peter Public	Minnesota	Town	38%	0	0	0
Tomah Area	Wisconsin	Town	42%	0	0	0
Tupelo Public	Mississippi	Town	58%	0	0	0
Twin Falls	Idaho	Town	57%	0	0	0
Warren Consolidated Schools	Michigan	City	49%	0	0	0
Warren County	Pennsylvania	Town	42%	0	0	0
Warrensburg R-VI	Missouri	Town	35%	0	0	0
Washington County Public Schools	Virginia	Rural	43%	0	0	0
Washington Local	Ohio	City	55%	0	0	0
Webb City R-VII	Missouri	Suburb	47%	0	0	0
West Covina Unified	California	Suburb	62%	0	0	0
West Valley School District (Spokane)	Washington	Suburb	49%	0	0	0

continues

School district	State	Urbanicity	Poverty rate	Hypersegregation index score	Isolation of poverty index score	Isolation of wealth index score
Willmar Public	Minnesota	Town	50%	0	0	0
Winston County	Alabama	Rural	60%	0	0	0
Wise County Public Schools	Virginia	Rural	53%	0	0	0
Wyoming County Schools	West Virginia	Rural	56%	0	0	0
Wythe County Public Schools	Virginia	Rural	47%	0	0	0
Xenia Community City	Ohio	Suburb	51%	0	0	0
Yadkin County Schools	North Carolina	Rural	49%	0	0	0
Yelm	Washington	Rural	40%	0	0	0

Source: Authors' analysis based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics, "Common Core of Data: 2011-12 Local Educational Agency (School District) Universe Survey Data File and Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey Data File," available at https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/pubschuniv.asp (last accessed October 2016).

Methodology

This report uses school- and district-level data from the National Center for Education Statistics, or NCES, Common Core of Data, or CCD, for the 2010-2011 school year on students' eligibility to receive free or reduced-price lunch, or FRPL. These data are used to calculate the Hypersegregation Index, Isolation of Poverty Index, and Isolation of Wealth Index for each eligible school district in the country. The Hypersegregation Index equals the percent of schools in a district that have an FRPL rate that is more than a 20-percentage-point deviation from the district FRPL rate. For example, in a district with a 50 percent FRPL rate, the Hypersegregation Index would be the proportion of schools with an FRPL rate less than 30 percent or more than 70 percent. This is the formula for this measure:

$$\frac{\textit{(\# of schools with FRPL rate at least 20 percentage points above or below the district FRPL rate)}}{\textit{(\# of schools in the district)}}$$

In other words, the Hypersegregation Index is a measure of the proportion of schools in the district that look very different from the district as a whole in terms of the enrollment of FRPL eligible students. A Hypersegregation Index score of .45 would show that 45 percent of schools in a given district have an FRPL rate that was 20 percentage points above or below the district FRPL rate. This is a measure of evenness.

This report also uses the Isolation of Poverty Index and Isolation of Wealth Index as other measures of segregation. These indices can be used to calculate two types of segregation: the proportion of a district's FRPL-eligible students attending schools with an FRPL rate of more than 75 percent; and the proportion of non-FRPL students attending schools with FRPL rate less than 25 percent. Here's the formula for the Isolation of Poverty Index:

$$\frac{\textit{(\# of FRPL-eligible students attending schools with FRPL rate more than 75 percent)}}{\textit{(\# of FRPL-eligible students in the district)}}$$

Here's the formula for the Isolation of Wealth Index:

$$\frac{\textit{(\# of non-FRPL-eligible students attending schools with FRPL rate less than 25 percent)}}{\textit{(\# of non-FRPL-eligible students in the district)}}$$

For example, a district with an Isolation of Poverty Index score of .60 percent indicates that 60 percent of FRPL-eligible students in a district attend schools with FRPL rates above 75 percent. This is a measure of exposure.

For the purposes of reporting these data, the authors established a definition of a "hyperisolated district" as a district with 50 percent or more of FRPL-eligible students attending schools with an FRPL rate above 75 percent, or a district with 50 percent or more non-FRPL students attending schools with an FRPL rate below 25 percent.

The outcomes of the Isolation of Poverty Index and Isolation of Wealth Index are highly correlated with district FRPL rates because districts with very high or low populations of FRPL- eligible students are much more likely to be economically isolated. Because of this correlation, the authors rely on the Hypersegregation Index to identify the most- and least-segregated districts, while including the Isolation of Poverty Index and Isolation of Wealth Index data as measures of further insight.

This report applies a number of exclusions to the data in order to produce meaningful and accurate findings. For all indices, the authors excluded:

- Districts and schools missing either enrollment or FRPL data
- Districts with fewer than 10 schools or fewer than 500 students
- Charter school districts
- Districts that only served elementary school students or secondary school students (only those that served grades K-12 were included)
- Districts that the National Center for Education Statistics designate as either vocational and special education, or as an educational service agency
- Districts with suspicious school-level FRPL rates. There were 27 districts that had schools with a 100 percent FRPL rate, and these districts may have been implementing the Community Eligibility Provision
- Districts that did not report FRPL rates for charter schools—there were 62 such districts, mostly in California, Oregon, and Tennessee.

For the Hypersegregation Index and the calculation of the most- or least-segregated districts, the authors excluded districts with FRPL rates of less than 20 percent or more than 80 percent. CAP's reasoning for this exclusion is as follows:

- Districts with very high or low FRPL rates can do little to remedy segregation within their district boundaries (although they can often do a lot by working with neighboring districts to allow students to attend schools across district lines)
- Because the Hypersegregation Index is a measure of the proportion of schools with FRPL rates more than 20 percentage points away from the district FRPL rate, districts with very high or low FRPL rates would be more likely to score low on this index even though their schools are not necessarily integrated.

With these exclusions, the analysis sample includes 1,717 school districts, 41,102 schools, and 27,384,801 students; these numbers are equal to 11 percent, 47 percent, and 58 percent within districts that have available FRPL and enrollment data, respectively. In other words, the authors excluded the vast majority of districts, half of schools, but the district and schools included account for about 60 percent of the nation's students.

Survey design and analysis

As part of this report, the authors designed and administered a survey questionnaire regarding the subject of school economic integration to 1,000 American adults using a convenience sample on Mechanical Turk. The authors constructed and applied a post-stratification weight—accounting for demographic variables of race, gender, age, and income level—to calculate findings that are nationally representative.

The survey questionnaire[126] asked respondents a range of questions related to economic school diversity, including:

- In a fair and just school district, how many lower-income and higher-income students should attend low-, mid-, and high-poverty schools?
- In your local school district, how many lower-income and higher-income students attend low-, mid-, and high-poverty schools?
- In the country at large, how many lower-income and higher-income students attend low-, mid-, and high-poverty schools?
- Do you agree that school integration will improve the quality of education received by lower-income students?
- Do you agree that school integration will improve the quality of education received by higher-income students?
- How important is the issue of school segregation to you?

The survey defined low-poverty schools as schools where 25 percent or less of students come from low-income families. The survey defined mid-poverty schools as schools where 26 percent to 74 percent of students come from low-income families. The survey defined high-poverty schools as schools where at least 75 percent of students come from low-income families. The survey also established definitions of "low-income" and "high-income" using an annual household income threshold of $50,000—with households above $50,000 being considered high income with the converse being true. The survey did not include any questions about racial integration.

Focus group sessions

The authors conducted focus group sessions with parents of school-age children enrolled in traditional public and charter schools. The sessions were held on October 8, 2015, and October 15, 2015, in Baltimore and Bethesda, Maryland.

Participants were divided into four separate groups based on race and socioeconomic background. The Baltimore groups consisted of white parents who were divided into two groups—one group of parents with college degrees and household incomes of $75,000 and higher, and the second group consisted of white parents without college degrees and household incomes of $50,000 and lower. The Bethesda groups consisted of African American and Hispanic parents who were divided into two separate groups, based on the same socioeconomic divisions as the Baltimore groups. Participants' children ranged from kindergarteners to high school students across the Baltimore and Washington, D.C., metro areas.

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The Center for American Progress is an independent, nonpartisan policy institute that is dedicated to improving the lives of all Americans, through bold, progressive ideas, as well as strong leadership and concerted action. Our aim is not just to change the conversation, but to change the country.

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As progressives, we believe America should be a land of boundless opportunity, where people can climb the ladder of economic mobility. We believe we owe it to future generations to protect the planet and promote peace and shared global prosperity.

And we believe an effective government can earn the trust of the American people, champion the common good over narrow self-interest, and harness the strength of our diversity.

Our Approach

We develop new policy ideas, challenge the media to cover the issues that truly matter, and shape the national debate. With policy teams in major issue areas, American Progress can think creatively at the cross-section of traditional boundaries to develop ideas for policymakers that lead to real change. By employing an extensive communications and outreach effort that we adapt to a rapidly changing media landscape, we move our ideas aggressively in the national policy debate.

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