

# Integrating Suburban Schools:



How to Benefit from  
Growing Diversity and  
Avoid Segregation



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## Written by:

Adai Tefera • Erica Frankenberg • Genevieve Siegel-Hawley • Gina Chirichigno

## Production:

Laurie Russman and Kyra Young

## Layout:

Chris Calvert

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The following manual was written to help guide education stakeholders—including parents, students, school board members, community activists, administrators, policymakers and attorneys—in your efforts to promote racial diversity and avoid racial isolation in suburban school systems.

This manual provides critical information on the current legal, political and policy issues that inform those efforts. It first addresses the critical importance of creating diverse learning environments in racially changing suburban school districts. The manual then addresses the legal landscape governing school integration policy, in addition to outlining general principles for creating racially diverse schools. We also examine the vital role that teachers and administrators play in building successfully integrated schools and classrooms. The second half of the manual includes a number of specific examples of suburban school districts experimenting with strategies to promote integrated schools. We dedicate the final chapter to describing methods for building the political will in your community for voluntary integration policies.

In order to make the manual as reader-friendly as possible, we provide you with a list of further reading materials at the end of each section but deliberately do not include specific citations within the text. The appendix of the manual contains an extensive list of education and legal resources that may further assist in your voluntary integration efforts.

# Contents

<b>SUBURBAN SCHOOLS AND DIVERSITY: WHY DOES IT MATTER?</b>	<b>1</b>
What is a Suburban School?	1
Brief History of Suburban Schools	2
Racial Transformation of Suburban Schools & the Spread of Segregation	3
Why Does Diversity Matter?	4
<b>THE LEGAL LANDSCAPE GOVERNING SCHOOL INTEGRATION</b>	<b>7</b>
Case Background	9
The “Strict Scrutiny” Standard	10
Permissible Race-Conscious Measures	12
What Kinds Of Assignment Plans Are Considered Narrowly Tailored?	13
“Race Matters”	14
A Parting Word: The Promise Of Brown	14
<b>GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR INTEGRATION IN SUBURBAN SCHOOLS</b>	<b>17</b>
Transportation	17
Intra-district Integration Efforts	18
Concluding Thoughts on Magnets	21
Inter-district Integration Efforts	22
Conclusion	25
<b>DISTRICT INTEGRATION EXPERIENCES</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>SUBURBAN TEACHERS AND RACIALLY DIVERSE SCHOOLS</b>	<b>35</b>
What is Unique about Teaching in Racially Diverse Classrooms?	36
Specific practices for diverse classrooms	36
Resources for teaching in diverse classrooms and schools	37
Conclusion	38
<b>FROM PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT TO POLITICAL WILL: DEVELOPING AWARENESS, PROVIDING SUPPORT, AND MAKING TRANSFORMATION POSSIBLE</b>	<b>41</b>
Community Meetings	43
Surveys, Focus Groups, and Living Room Dialogues	43
Using and/or Creating Print and Video Resources	44
Community-wide Dialogue (Study Circles)	45
Citizen Committees	46
Using the Media to Engage the Public	46
Concluding Thoughts	47
<b>APPENDIX</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>FACT SHEETS</b>	<b>57</b>

Part One

# SUBURBAN SCHOOLS AND DIVERSITY: WHY DOES IT MATTER?

## What is a Suburban School?

The idyllic scenario of living in a neighborhood with perfectly manicured lawns, white picket fences, and good schools is what many Americans dream of, and the rapid suburbanization over the last several decades has been driven, in part, by the belief that this dream can be attained in the suburbs. But what exactly is a suburb and what is a suburban school? Today, suburbs are rapidly growing and changing, defying traditional notions of what it means to live and go to school in the suburbs. Some broadly define a “suburb” as *any* area that is “not in a central city.” Others seek to define types of suburbs in order to better encompass the range of suburban communities with variations in tax bases, periods of settlement, housing stock, and commercial development. The populations of suburbs can vary dramatically even within the same metropolitan area.

Myron Orfield, professor of law at the University of Minnesota, has developed a typology of suburban communities that explores suburban variation. For example, the “at-risk segregated suburban community” is usually densely populated, located in the inner ring of the suburbs, associated with many of the social challenges characteristic of urban communities and lacking the resources to begin to address

their suburban challenges. In addition, these at-risk suburbs often lack the potential historical and cultural attractions traditionally located in urban centers, like museums, theaters, landmarks, and restaurants. Conversely, “low-density communities and developing suburbs” are usually located in the outer rings of metropolitan areas and experience problems when development outpaces necessary infrastructure. This situation can result in overcrowded schools, congested traffic and poorly

functioning sewage systems. While both of these types of communities are labeled “suburban,” the issues confronting each differ considerably.

Just as the definition of suburbs is broad and changing, the idea of suburban schools is changing as well. Suburban schools are located in residential areas on the outside of metropolitan areas and, compared to many urban schools, often have higher standardized test scores, college going rates, and attendance rates. For these reasons, suburbs continue

to be popular places to live for many families with school-age children.

Unlike earlier decades, today’s suburban schools are no longer always located in racially homogenous, high-income communities. Instead, the suburbs of the 21st century often represent the frontier of racial change in America. In this century’s



first decade, racially transitioning suburban communities face choices and decisions that will move them towards very different long-term destinies. As suburban demographics evolve, policy can either harness the social potential presented by diverse communities and schools, or it can exacerbate and harden divisions and inequities. For the past several decades, there has been a vacuum of national and state leadership in helping suburbs manage rapid demographic transitions. The absence of strong leadership at higher levels of government has set many suburban school systems adrift, not knowing where to turn for training or even how to discuss policy options that could guide their increasingly diverse schools and neighborhoods towards a more equitable, beneficial, and sustainable future. This manual seeks to help begin filling that void.

The first section of the manual: (1) provides a brief history of suburbs, (2) describes the racial demographics of suburban schools and the current challenges of resegregation in suburban school districts, and (3) explains the importance of creating integrated schools and classrooms.

## Brief History of Suburban Schools

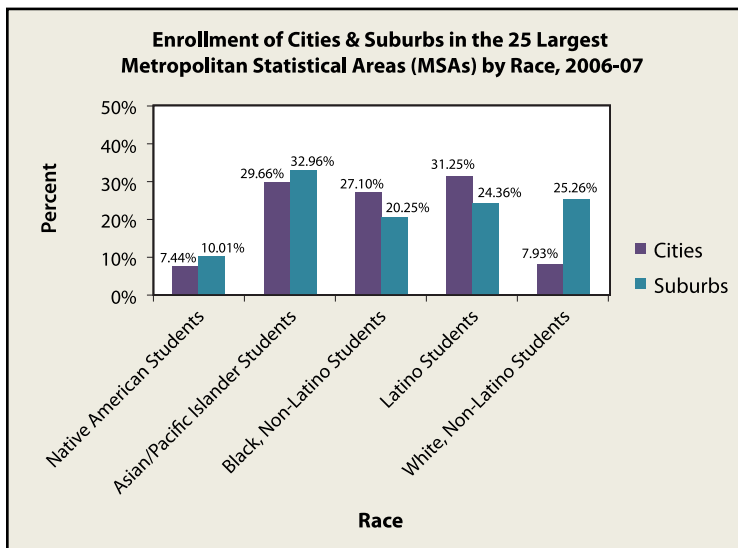
Migration to suburbs began in the early 1900s and boomed in the post World War II decades of the 50s and 60s. It was during the time of accelerated suburban development that the legal struggle to end racial segregation was at its height. The development of suburbs, therefore, began under overtly discriminatory policies, including the Federal Housing Administration's denial of mortgages in racially integrated communities. In 1954, however, the Supreme Court decided in *Brown vs. Board of Education* that "separate but equal" was a violation of the U.S. Constitution. In 1968, Congress passed the Fair Housing Act, which sought to curb housing discrimination and required affirmative actions to further residential integration by communities.

The *Brown* decision was pivotal to the advancement of racially integrated schools, along with other enforcement and funding efforts by the federal government, such as the Emergency School Aid Act passed in the 1970s that provided financial assistance for communities with integrated schools. Yet, discriminatory housing policies persisted and white migration to the suburbs resulted in many urban communities witnessing resegregation. More recently, despite such earlier resegregation trends in urban communities, little has been done in suburban communities to prevent a similar problem from occurring, even with clear evidence from both school statistics and housing transactions that minority families were becoming increasingly concentrated and segregated in the suburbs. Thus the failure to create policies promoting racially integrated suburbs is leading not only to the segregation of some suburban neighborhoods but also is often associated with the segregation of their schools.

By the mid 1970s, the Supreme Court slowly began limiting what it required in school desegregation cases. In one of the most significant cases of this era, *Milliken v. Bradley* (1974), the Court concluded that lower courts could not order "inter-district" desegregation that encompasses urban as well as suburban school districts without first showing that the suburban district (or the state) was liable for the segregation across district boundaries. The practical impact of this decision was a serious blow to school desegregation remedies. In effect, a line was established between city and suburban school systems, which could not be crossed in designing desegregation plans. Whites, who for decades had tried to avoid the desegregation of their schools, finally had a place to go – the suburbs -- where they could successfully do so.

## Racial Transformation of Suburban Schools & the Spread of Segregation

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the population of people of color in the U.S. will continue to rise. By 2050, for example, the number of Latinos and Asians is expected to triple, and the number of African Americans is projected to grow nearly two percent. The number of whites, on the other hand, is the only racial group expected to see a decline, from 66 percent to 46 percent. This trend towards an increasingly diverse population is even more evident among our nation's children. By 2050, the number of students of color in the U.S. will jump from 44 percent to 62 percent.



Source: Calculations from NCEs Common Core of Data, 2006-07

While African American and Latino students continue to make up a significant percentage of students in schools located in cities, the migration of middle class families of color to the suburbs has been steadily increasing since the 1970s. In fact, in 2006-07, a slightly lower percentage of African American and Latino students in the 25 largest metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) were in the suburbs than in the cities. Within that context, higher shares of Latino students were in the suburbs of the large

metropolitan areas in 2006-07 than was the case for African American students. Indeed, the percentage of Latino students enrolled in large suburban schools was nearly equal to the percentage of white students in the suburbs of the 25 largest MSAs. Of all racial groups, Asians were the largest percentage of students in the suburbs of the 25 largest MSAs. Nearly one in three Asian students in the public schools lived in large suburban areas. (Graph 1 illustrates these trends.)

The public schools in our largest two regions of the country, the West and South, already have non-white majorities. The Civil Rights Project's analysis of census data also finds that the percentage of white suburban residents in the largest 25 metropolitan areas fell from 81% to 72% in the 1990s, while each minority group living in the suburbs increased during this same period, most notably among Latinos. Furthermore, the suburban population grew in the largest 25 MSAs by approximately 17%, with nearly 20 million new residents. Given all of these trends, the suburbs, which have long been seen as overwhelmingly white, are not only more diverse today than ever before, but will be increasingly diverse in the future.

The problem, however, is that as diversity in suburban schools rises, the extent of racial isolation and segregation is rising as well. In 2006, for example, the majority of white suburban students (54 percent) attended schools that were more than half white, while a majority of African American and Latino students (67 and 75 percent respectively) attended suburban schools with a non-white majority. Remarkably, nearly 30 percent of African American and Latino *suburban* students are in hyper-segregated suburban schools with 0-10 percent white students. Asian students, on the other hand, are made up of both a highly privileged and substantially disadvantaged group of students, with 20 percent of Asian suburban students in schools

with majority white students and 43 percent in majority non-white schools.

These trends suggest that the racial segregation often associated with schools in the cities--of separate and often unequal schools with many students of color attending overcrowded and under-resourced schools--is now spreading into parts of suburbia. And while educational policies continue to try to solve the problem of segregated schools by focusing on solutions within districts, the vast majority of racial/ethnic segregation in U.S. public schools occurs between and not within school districts. Due in part to the *Milliken v. Bradley* case, the fact is that the majority of segregation occurs between city school systems and suburban systems, and also between different suburban school systems.

The deepening segregation of suburban schools in the U.S. is an alarming trend that can be addressed as long as there is a thorough understanding of the serious problems associated with segregation and the curative need for integrated schools. The next section, therefore, explains the importance of addressing the current trend toward resegregation and the importance of creating racially integrated schools and classrooms.

## Why Does Diversity Matter?

In *Brown vs. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court stated that "education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments...it is required in the performance of the most basic public responsibilities...It is the very foundation of good citizenship." And even in the recent *Seattle/Louisville* (2007) case, five Supreme Court Justices declared that there is a compelling government interest in promoting diversity and avoiding racial isolation. Research reaffirms these assertions, concluding that integrated schools have academic, social, and psychological benefits for all students.

A short-term benefit of desegregated schools is their effect on academic achievement. Research shows that African American and Latino students perform better in integrated schools than in schools with higher percentages of students of color. Decades of research has also shown that student achievement is higher (regardless of students' own class background) when students are in classes where the average socio-economic status is higher—in other words, in classes with large numbers of students from families with middle-class or higher income levels. Higher student aspirations resulting from integrated schools have also been linked to higher expectations of students typically found within these schools.

In addition to the academic benefits of integrated schools, there are long-term social benefits as well. Racially integrated schools are associated with a reduction in racial stereotypes and greater cross-racial understanding among all students. This is particularly true for students who attend integrated schools at a younger age, which contrasts with the situation of adults or college aged students who have spent many years internalizing racial stereotypes from our still-segregated society. Students who attend diverse schools are also more likely to attend integrated colleges and workplaces (conversely, students who attend segregated schools are more likely to live in segregated communities, partially because of the lack of opportunity to interact with and get to know others from different racial and ethnic backgrounds).

While there is often a focus on the benefits of desegregation programs for students of color, white students benefit as well. For example, white students who attend racially diverse schools demonstrate more racial tolerance than their peers in segregated white environments. It is also the case that school desegregation programs have little or no negative effect on white students' test scores,

particularly for those schools that are predominately white. It is unfortunate, however, that white students are the least likely group of students to attend racially diverse schools, making them the most segregated of all racial groups.

Students in racially diverse schools are also better able to realize the existence and effect of discrimination on other students. They are more tolerant and inclusive towards the members of racial groups to which their friends belong. In addition, students from integrated learning environments exhibit higher comfort levels in engaging with members of racial groups different from their own. Exposure to a diverse population of students also helps students learn how to interact and get along with diverse people, cultures and points of view.

Beyond the academic and social advantages of integrated schools, there are the psychological benefits produced by feelings of safety, along with less bullying and less loneliness. And when students have positive social and psychological experiences at school, they tend to do better academically.

The academic, social and psychological benefits of integrated schools are an asset not only to students and the communities they live in, but to the progress of this nation as well. Integrated schools produce a more engaged citizenry and a stronger workforce, and provide students important skills for understanding diverse communities, which is a growing asset in today's multicultural and interdependent global economy. Finally, integrated schools increase civic engagement and help to prepare students to serve our growing democracy.

### Further Reading:

**Frankenberg, E. and Orfield, G.** (2007). *Lessons in Integration: Realizing the Promise of Racial Diversity in American Schools*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press.

**Juvonen, J., Nishina, A. & Graham, S.** (2006). Ethnic Diversity and Perceptions of Safety in Urban Middle Schools, (17) 393-400, *Journal of the Association for Psychological Science*. Available at: <http://pss.sagepub.com/content/17/5/393.full.pdf+html>

**Orfield, G.** (2009). *Reviving the Goals of an Integrated Society: A 21st Century Challenge*. Los Angeles: UCLA Civil Rights Project. Available at: <http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/reviving-the-goal-of-an-integrated-society-a-21st-century-challenge>.

**Orfield, M.** (2002). *American Metropolitcs*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution Press.

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**Wells, A.S., Holme, J.J. Revilla, A.T., & Atanda, A.K.** (2004). *How Desegregation Changed Us: The Effects of Racially Mixed Schools on Students and Society*. New York: Teachers College.





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***The absence of strong leadership at higher levels of government has set many suburban school systems adrift.***

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## Part Two

# The Legal Landscape Governing School Integration

The evidence demonstrating the benefits of racial integration and the harms of segregation is substantial (as we saw in the previous chapter). While there are a number of possible strategies you can use to promote diversity and avoid racial isolation in your schools, (as we will see in the following chapters), policies involving race have always been extremely volatile ones on which Americans hold deep and passionate views. It is not surprising, then, that over time the courts have established complicated legal standards for evaluating race-conscious policies, regardless of whether they are tainted with discrimination and prejudice or designed to further racial justice and integration.

A generation ago, the most common desegregation policies were those adopted to comply with court orders or negotiated agreements with federal agencies. Such policies were most frequently implemented in the South where many school districts had formerly operated separate schools for African American and white students. The Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954 declared such laws to be "inherently unequal" and therefore violated the U.S. Constitution. The *Brown* decision was followed in the late 1960s and early 1970s by subsequent Supreme Court decisions clarifying what was required in order to thoroughly desegregate and to eliminate segregation "root and branch." During the 1960s, the executive and legislative branches of the federal government also increased pressure on school districts to implement desegregation plans. By 1970, the South was the most integrated region of the country for African American students. In 1973, the Supreme Court, for

the first time, also acknowledged the right of Latinos to desegregate.

In the 1970s, as desegregation cases came from outside the South, the Supreme Court began to limit the extent of desegregation efforts required to fully demonstrate that segregation had been eradicated. In 1974, the Court first limited desegregation in its *Milliken* decision, which effectively ended most city-suburban desegregation remedies. During the 1990s, a series of three decisions lessened considerably the burden districts had to meet to be declared "unitary" or released from federal court oversight. In the aftermath of these decisions, dozens of districts were declared unitary, and many have ended more far-reaching efforts to desegregate.

Some suburbs may still be under court order or bound by an Office for Civil Rights (OCR) agreement to desegregate their schools, and as such, must continue to abide by their commitments, seeking ways to make desegregation work most effectively and agreeing to modifications when necessary. Districts that have already been declared unitary may also be subject to another court order if new violations are found. And though many suburban communities, particularly in the northern and western regions of the country, were never placed under court supervision, the possibility for legal action still exists under a 1973 ruling in *Keyes v. Denver School District No. 1*. *Keyes* which held that district policies intentionally segregating students – including siting new schools in racially isolated neighborhoods or drawing attendance zones in an isolating manner – were illegal. Today, racially transitioning and expanding suburbs are likely to confront decisions about constructing

new schools and redistricting, and any policy decisions that serve to increase and deepen segregation are subject to scrutiny.

A number of districts continue to pursue integration voluntarily after they were declared unitary-and still others adopted integration policies even though they never had any remedial obligation to implement desegregation plans. These districts (see Part IV) have chosen to voluntarily pursue integration, valuing its importance in helping to achieve their district's goals. Yet, as alluded to, just as the courts affected the desegregation efforts of districts a generation ago, so too are these newer plans also subject to compliance with relevant legal precedents.

On June 28, 2007, the Supreme Court weighed in on voluntary integration policies, issuing its own complicated decision

in two cases at the same time. *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District* and *Meredith v. Jefferson County Board of Education* challenged the voluntary integration plans in Seattle, Washington and Louisville, Kentucky respectively. (From now on, we'll refer to the Court's decision as the "Seattle/Louisville decision"). A majority of the Justices recognized the important goals of diversity and avoiding racial isolation in K-12 public schools, but the Court struck down particular aspects of the Seattle and Louisville student assignment plans because, in the Court's view, they were not carefully designed to achieve those goals. And, while the Court placed limits on the ability of



school districts to consider race in student assignment plans, it did not – as some commentators have sometimes reported – rule out any and all considerations of race. In fact, a majority of the Justices explicitly left the door open for school districts to utilize race-conscious measures that promote diversity and avoid racial isolation in schools.

It is important to understand the historical context and legal implications of this decision before beginning to develop or modify the student

assignment plan in your district, but this is not a simple task. As noted above, the Supreme Court issued a deeply divided and complex 185-page ruling that did not provide a clear and certain path about what you and your school district can do to promote diversity and avoid racial isolation in your schools.

While the specific plans in Seattle and Louisville were struck down as unconstitutional, many of the policies and strategies that school districts commonly use to promote school diversity were not directly addressed or confronted by the Court. The purpose of this chapter is to provide you with as much guidance as we can offer.

An initial word of encouragement: the Seattle/Louisville decision does not, and should not, signal an end to efforts that bring children in communities together across lines of difference or that fight the inequities children almost inevitably encounter in racially isolated, under-resourced schools. What it does mean is that each school district must be

careful as it explores the development and adoption of a comprehensive set of integrative school policies. Absent due caution, a voluntary school integration plan may be vulnerable to legal challenges by those who are dissatisfied with their children’s assignment or who oppose racial integration on principle. Indeed, the Seattle/Louisville cases arose out of those very situations. And, while this Manual aims to provide information and guidance – to the extent currently available – on the approaches that may be legally viable after the decision, the legal landscape will no doubt change over time, as a result of future challenges and direction from the courts.

## CASE BACKGROUND

In order to fully describe the contours of the current legal landscape governing student assignment plans, we describe in detail the two plans under scrutiny in the *Seattle/Louisville* decision.

### *The Seattle and Louisville Student Assignment Plans*

The Seattle and Louisville school districts, along with school districts throughout the country, voluntarily adopted modest measures to achieve racial diversity in their schools. Both the Seattle and Louisville districts sought to preserve educational choice for parents and students and considered race as a factor in student assignment only when schools were racially isolated or predominantly one race. Both districts’ student assignment plans relied on the choices of students and parents to attend or transfer to integrated schools or to attend their neighborhood schools. In both districts, the plans provided that the percentage of white/non-white (Seattle) or African American/other (Louisville) students attending each school should roughly reflect the proportions of those students in the district as a whole.

### *The Seattle/Louisville Decision*

The Justices were deeply divided in their views and issued five separate opinions. Chief Justice Roberts wrote the plurality opinion (an opinion written by a group of justices when no single opinion received the support of the majority of the court) which Justice Kennedy joined in part. But Justice Kennedy did not join significant portions of the plurality opinion, which means that those portions of the opinion do not carry a majority of the Court, and are not the law of the land. Put another way, the parts of the plurality opinion joined by Justice Kennedy – and only those parts – carried a majority of the Justices and constitute the opinion of the Court. [From now on, we’ll refer to the portions of Chief Justice Robert’s opinion that Justice Kennedy did not join (i.e. where only four justices signed on) as the plurality opinion; and the portions of the opinion where Justice Kennedy did sign on (i.e. where Justice Kennedy’s additional vote constitutes a five-vote majority) as the opinion of the Court].

Justice Kennedy wrote his own separate opinion, which we will focus upon in discussing the impact of the decision. We look to Justice Kennedy’s opinion because in those areas where he disagreed with Chief Justice Roberts’ opinion, he, together with the four dissenting Justices, formed a different majority (we’ll call it the “Kennedy majority”).

The Kennedy majority explicitly recognized that school districts have a “compelling interest” (see below) in promoting diversity and in avoiding racial isolation in schools. This opinion left the window open for school districts to continue to use race-conscious measures to achieve these interests, as long as individual students are not classified *solely* by their race. Before we discuss which race-conscious measures were given safe harbor by the Kennedy majority, we lay out the legal standard courts generally apply when school districts take account of race in student assignment.

## THE “STRICT SCRUTINY” STANDARD

Federal courts generally apply a legal standard called “strict scrutiny” whenever a governmental body, such as a public school board, explicitly considers or takes account of race. In the *Seattle/Louisville* decision, the Court held that school districts must meet the strict scrutiny standard when individual students are classified by their race (when race is considered more broadly, such as in the drawing of attendance boundaries, a lesser standard might apply – see *inset*). The application of strict scrutiny, however, does not automatically mean a court will find the use of race illegal. To assume so is a common misinterpretation of the law. But when a school district does take account of the race of individual students and its actions are challenged in court, the district needs to satisfy two distinct requirements under the strict scrutiny test. First, the individual racial classification must serve a *compelling interest*. Second, the racial classification must be *narrowly tailored* to further that compelling interest. In short-hand, these two requirements are referred to as the *compelling interest* prong and the *narrowly tailored* prong of the strict scrutiny test. The Supreme Court established the strict scrutiny test many years ago because it believed that the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was adopted to affirm the equality among citizens and therefore requires skepticism of any distinctions based on race or ethnicity.

If the school district fails to meet either of these two prongs, a court will find the challenged race-based policy illegal and order the district to stop using it. On the other hand, if the school district has designed its policy or plan to satisfy both of the requirements of strict scrutiny, then the district may continue using it as a method of fostering diversity and avoiding racial isolation in its schools.

Therefore, in the *Seattle/Louisville* decision, the Supreme Court only applied strict scrutiny to

individual racial classifications, but indicated that a lesser standard might apply when race is considered more broadly, as in the drawing of school attendance boundaries or in the recruitment of certain students or faculty by race. As an example, taking account of the racial composition of the neighborhood where a student resides, instead of the race of that individual student, would not trigger strict scrutiny. Instead a lesser standard would apply, and the school district would only need to demonstrate that the use of race is rationally related to a legitimate interest.

### *Compelling Interest Prong*

A compelling interest is simply legalese for “a really good, legally acceptable reason.” When a school district uses or considers race in any way, such as in the assignment of students to schools, the law requires it to state a very good reason why it is conscious of race. Courts demand this justification to make sure that the district is not engaging in unconstitutional racial discrimination or simply pandering to racial politics.

*Promoting diversity and avoiding racial isolation in schools.* Since *Brown*, the courts have frequently discussed—and the public is aware of—the importance and value of diverse learning environments in K-12 public schools. As described in the first section of this manual, integration can result in documented educational and social benefits, both short- and long-term, to students of all racial backgrounds. Integrated schools can also have a positive impact on the health of and public support for the school system itself, and on the success of our broader community and democratic society.

In the *Seattle/Louisville* decision, a majority of Justices recognized – for the first time – compelling interests in promoting student diversity and avoiding racial isolation in K-12 public schools (in the *Grutter v. Bollinger* decision of 2003, a Court majority

had already acknowledged a compelling interest in diversity for higher education institutions). As Justice Kennedy noted,

*“This Nation has a moral and ethical obligation to fulfill its historic commitment to creating an integrated society that ensures equal opportunity for all of its children. A compelling interest exists in avoiding racial isolation, an interest that a school district, in its discretion and expertise, may choose to pursue. Likewise, a district may consider it a compelling interest to achieve a diverse student population.”*

This means that school districts can, and should, continue to take steps to pursue diversity and/or avoid racial isolation in schools.

*Other Related Compelling Interests.* School systems that adopt voluntary school integration plans do so for a variety of reasons, not all of which may be explained by simply saying that there are educational benefits from attending diverse schools or potential harmful effects of attending racially isolated ones. Some of these other reasons—such as increased school safety, improved or equitable community and parental support, the countering of segregative residential patterns, or the maintenance of stability within the school system—are as, or even more, compelling. The Court appears to have combined or folded in each of these ancillary reasons with the interests in promoting diversity and avoiding racial isolation in schools, and so for efficiency’s sake, we too will not independently address them here.

In the Seattle/Louisville decision, the Court reaffirmed two other compelling interests, but concluded that they did not apply in the context of K-12 voluntary integration efforts. The first of these two interests – in remedying the effects of past discrimination and segregation- is well established in the law. The remedial interest, as it is often

called, was commonly recognized in the era of court-ordered desegregation. For the most part, the remedial interest can only be asserted when there has already been a judicial finding of overt racial discrimination, such as the maintenance of segregative student assignment policies. In a unitary school district, or one that has been released from its court order to desegregate, it is difficult to prove that any present-day racial segregation in schools is caused by intentional discrimination or the lingering effects of prior segregation. Thus, in most of the recent voluntary integration cases, including the Seattle/Louisville decision, courts have failed to adopt the remediation argument.

### *Narrow Tailoring Prong*

The second part of the strict scrutiny test insists that individual racial classifications be narrowly tailored to their stated compelling interest. This requirement is little more than a legal means-ends analysis. A key to meeting the strict scrutiny standard is to ensure that the race-conscious method being employed (the means) is closely and narrowly tied to your stated goals (the ends). As it applies to voluntary school integration plans, it demands that a school system use individual racial classifications to achieve its stated goals that are no more or less intrusive than they need to be.

The Seattle and Louisville plans were struck down because the Court concluded that they were not narrowly tailored. To be narrowly tailored to achieve the compelling interest in diversity, a race-conscious admissions program must meet the following four requirements: (1) holistic, individualized review of each applicant where race is used in a flexible, non-mechanical way; (2) serious and good faith consideration of race-neutral alternatives; (3) no undue burden on non-minority applicants, and (4) periodic review of the program’s continued necessity.



The Court identified three major problems with the consideration of race in the respective open choice and transfer provisions of the Seattle and Louisville student assignment plans. First, the Court objected to the binary (white/non-white or African American/non-African American) system of racial classifications, because it drew a crude racial distinction that did not promote diversity along its many racial and ethnic dimensions. Second, the Court held that neither Seattle nor Louisville had presented sufficient evidence to demonstrate that they had seriously considered race-neutral alternatives. Third, the Court determined that the race-conscious provisions of the Seattle and Louisville plans did not affect enough students to be deemed “necessary” to achieve racial integration.

In the *Seattle/Louisville* decision, a majority of the Justices recognized a different set of compelling interests that school districts can pursue, but still applied some of the narrow tailoring factors from the *Grutter* decision. *Grutter v. Bollinger* and *Gratz v. Bollinger* were two companion cases heard by the Supreme Court in 2003 challenging the consideration of race in college and university admissions. In *Grutter*, the Court affirmed the consideration of race as a factor in the individualized, holistic evaluation of applicants to the University of Michigan Law School. In *Gratz*, the Court struck down the admission policy of the University of Michigan’s undergraduate school, because a certain number of points were automatically awarded to applicants from underrepresented minority groups. In the *Seattle/Louisville* decision, Justice Kennedy noted that school districts that take account of race as a component in student assignment should do so as part of a “nuanced, individual evaluation of school needs and school characteristics” informed by *Grutter*.

## PERMISSIBLE RACE-CONSCIOUS MEASURES

So how can race be considered in assigning students to your schools after the *Seattle/Louisville* decision? First, Justice Kennedy explicitly endorsed the following race-conscious methods, providing safe harbor to school districts to use and consider race in employing any and all of these strategies. These include:

- ◆ Strategic site selection of new schools
- ◆ Drawing attendance zones with general recognition of the racial demographics of neighborhoods
- ◆ Allocating resources for special programs
- ◆ Recruiting students and faculty in a targeted manner
- ◆ Tracking enrollments, performance and other statistics by race

Second, Justice Kennedy noted that race could be a component of other assignment methods as long as they reflect a “more nuanced, individual evaluation of school needs and student characteristics.” Justice Kennedy did not provide particular examples, so it is not altogether clear what is included here. We do, however, have some guidance. We know that the racial tiebreaker in Seattle and the consideration of race in the evaluation of transfers in Louisville did not meet this “nuanced, individual evaluation” standard, and we also know that Justice Kennedy specifically provided that the consideration of race as a component in student assignment should be informed by the Supreme Court’s decision in *Grutter v. Bollinger*, with the added adjustment that the “the criteria relevant to student placement” in K-12 schools “would differ based on the age of the students, the needs of parents, and the role of the schools.” Third, while Justice Kennedy clearly disfavored the use of individual racial classifications, he indicated that they could be used as a last resort.

## WHAT KINDS OF ASSIGNMENT PLANS ARE CONSIDERED NARROWLY TAILORED?

In practice, given the unique relationship between each school system and its student assignment methods, uncertainty remains about what would satisfy the narrow tailoring inquiry. But, in light of the Court’s decision, below are some of the kinds of questions that you should expect courts to ask in determining whether a particular plan is sufficiently narrowly tailored.

### *Does the plan consider race in a sufficiently nuanced and context-appropriate way?*

The Court was expressly concerned about the use of binary racial categories to assign students:

white/non-white in Seattle and African American/non-African American in Louisville. The Court held that the Seattle school district considered students’ race in a manner that was too crude to truly achieve racial diversity or reduce isolation. In particular, the classification of students as either “white” or “non-white” was a “blunt distinction” that the Court believed could not advance integration of a student population with significant numbers of African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans. Justice Kennedy concluded that: “[f]ar from being narrowly tailored to its purposes, the [Seattle] system threatens to defeat its own ends, and the school district has provided no convincing explanation for its design.” Louisville was similarly condemned for employing a “limited notion of diversity,” by viewing race exclusively in terms of “African American/other.” Most important, this reasoning suggests that more nuanced and pluralistic considerations of race will be more likely to pass the Court’s narrow-tailoring inquiry.

### *Were “race neutral” alternatives considered?*

Given the long history of racial discrimination and oppression in America, courts tend to sanction using race-conscious policies – even for laudable purposes – only as a last resort. Therefore, as part of the narrow-tailoring analysis, courts look to see if school districts might be able to achieve their compelling interests in ways that rely on racial considerations to a lesser extent, or not at all. In the Seattle and Louisville cases, the Court concluded that the districts did not present sufficient evidence that they had seriously considered race-neutral alternatives: Seattle, because it quickly rejected several race neutral proposals and Louisville, because it had not presented evidence of its consideration of race-neutral strategies.

Consideration of these alternatives is crucial in implementing a successful and legal plan, even



though research and the experience of certain school districts suggests that, depending on a district's geography and demography, race-neutral proposals may only be minimally effective in reducing racial isolation and promoting diversity. Nor do courts require that school districts exhaust every possible race-neutral possibility before adopting a race-conscious plan. Rather, they simply need evidence that the school district made a good faith effort to explore other alternatives.

### *Is the use of race necessary to achieve stated goals?*

The Court noted that the use of race had minimal effects on student assignments in both Seattle and Louisville. In the Court's view, the racial tie-breaker in Seattle had "ultimately affected" only 52 students, and in Louisville, the racial guidelines only impacted 3 percent of assignments. While the Court did not believe that a greater use of race would be preferable, it concluded that "the minimal impact of the [Seattle and Louisville's] racial classifications on school enrollment casts doubt on the necessity of using racial classifications." The bottom line is that if you are able to achieve your stated goals without using racial classifications, you should do so.

### *Is the use of race closely tied to stated goals?*

A key to meeting the strict scrutiny standard is to ensure that the race-conscious method being employed (the means) is closely and narrowly tied to stated goals (the ends).

## "RACE MATTERS"

One of the sharpest disagreements between the Justices related to their views on the role race does and should play in American society. The plurality (or minority opinion) took the position that "the

way to stop discrimination on the basis [of race] is to stop discriminating on the basis of race," and that communities should be colorblind towards, and in their efforts to address, racial discrimination or inequality in schools. But Justice Kennedy rejects the plurality opinion's "all too unyielding insistence that race cannot be a factor in instances" when, in Justice Kennedy's view, it may, if not must, be taken into account. Moreover, Justice Kennedy finds the plurality "too dismissive of the legitimate interest government has in ensuring all people have equal opportunity regardless of race."

Second, Justice Kennedy dismisses the plurality opinion's assertion that the Constitution and the world we now live in are colorblind:

"The statement by Justice Harlan that '[o]ur Constitution is color-blind' was most certainly justified in the context of his dissent in *Plessy v. Ferguson*... as an aspiration, Justice Harlan's axiom must command our assent. In the real world, it is regrettable to say, it cannot be a universal constitutional principle."

Instead, Justice Kennedy concludes that while "[t]he enduring hope is that race should not matter, the reality is that too often it does."

## A PARTING WORD: THE PROMISE OF BROWN

In 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education* outlawed legal apartheid in America, and opened the hallways and classrooms of the nation's white schools to the scores of African American students who had long been excluded from and denied the opportunity of a quality education. In the words of the unanimous *Brown* Court:

*"Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments. Compulsory school attendance laws and the great expenditures for education both*

*demonstrate our recognition of the importance of education to our democratic society. It is required in the performance of our most basic public responsibilities, even service in the armed forces. It is the very foundation of good citizenship. Today it is a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment. In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms."*

Yet today, as we discussed, too many students of color attend racially isolated schools where they continue to be denied the opportunity of a high equality, inclusive education. In an effort to expand opportunity and strengthen the quality of education for students of all races, Seattle and Louisville, and like-directed communities around the country, sought to bring their children together across lines of difference – to include rather than exclude students at the educational table and to foster compassion and respect between future generations, rather than discomfort and indifference. But while the 2007 Court decision limited some types of districts' voluntary integration efforts, it did not, by any means, outlaw them.

Justice Breyer ends his impassioned and eloquent dissent by speaking of his grave concern about the impact of the decision on the hope and promise of *Brown*:

*"For what of the hope and promise of Brown? For much of this Nation's history, the races remained divided. It was not long ago that people of different races drank from separate fountains, rode on separate buses, and studied in separate schools. In this Court's finest hour, Brown v. Board of Education challenged this history and helped to change it. For Brown held out a promise. It was a promise embodied in three Amendments designed to make citizens of slaves. It was the promise of true racial equality, not as a matter of fine words on paper, but as a matter of everyday life in the Nation's cities and schools. It was about the nature of a democracy that must work for all Americans. It sought one law, one Nation, one people, not simply as a matter of legal principle but in terms of how we actually live.*

*The last half-century has witnessed great strides toward racial equality, but we have not yet realized the promise of Brown. To invalidate the plans under review is to threaten the promise of Brown. The plurality's position, I fear, would break that promise. This is a decision that the Court and the Nation will come to regret."*





.....

***Integration can result in  
documented educational  
and social benefits to  
students of all racial  
backgrounds.***

.....



## Part Three

# GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR INTEGRATION IN SUBURBAN SCHOOLS

Prior sections of this manual have discussed the importance of school integration as well as the legal landscape surrounding districts' efforts to promote diversity. In this section, we describe some general principles for suburban districts to consider as you develop policies aimed at encouraging diversity. In the next chapter, we profile the experiences of five districts pursuing diversity, and describe the different dimensions of their student assignment policies.

We have divided the general principles into those implemented *within* districts and those that are used *across* district boundaries. We focus on different methods of student assignment, but it is important to remember that a comprehensive integration policy should involve more than student assignment alone, and should, for example, include policies that promote diversity within schools. Before we delve into assignment options, we first describe the importance of transportation in ensuring that students can attend their assigned schools under a diversity plan.

## Transportation

Safe, reliable transportation to and from school is a basic need for students and families throughout the country. School districts provide transportation to students every day for a variety of reasons, most commonly related to geographic distance from school. Transportation is especially crucial in suburban locales, which may be less likely to have established systems of public transportation, in addition to lower housing density and more sprawling development.

In southern states prior to *Brown v. Board of Education*, transportation often helped maintain school segregation. Later, state-funded transportation was used as an explicit part of desegregation efforts. The first formal discussion of free school transportation was written into the 1965 federal desegregation guidelines. Two subsequent Supreme Court cases about districts' desegregation obligations noted the importance of transportation to help create desegregated schools, particularly in communities with segregated neighborhoods. Given the strong link between residential segregation and neighborhood schools, access to free transportation historically has been—and still remains—a fundamental component of desegregation efforts.

Patterns of increasing racial separation in the suburbs, even while diversity grows overall, highlight the need for free transportation in suburban school districts. And with the development of efforts to allow families more school choices, transportation remains a critical component of providing all students access to schools outside of their neighborhood—to allow students the same opportunity to attend schools regardless of where they live.

Most educational options, including magnet programs, charter schools and inter-district transfers, require transportation if they are going to represent real choices for all families. Transportation is critical for the success of magnet schools, in particular, which are designed to attract diverse students from across a district or districts. At the same time, this very design makes magnet school transportation more costly. Research shows that magnet schools

that provide free transportation are substantially more racially integrated than those that do not.

Charter schools, another popular school choice, enroll students who may travel further than their peers attending traditional public schools. However, charter schools often lack transportation requirements. Studies have long documented patterns of severe segregation in charter schools, which may be related to transportation gaps.

Finally, states with open school enrollment, like Minnesota, may provide students the opportunity to attend school across district boundary lines – from the city to the suburb – but without transport, those choices remain limited. By contrast, inter-district choice programs with an explicit desegregation focus all provide transportation to students. One alternative to free transportation is to provide reimbursement for transportation costs, but it is less effective at serving disadvantaged students due to the burden placed on families to pay for transportation up-front and to submit paperwork required for reimbursement.

In an era of rising transportation costs and declining budgets, transportation has been one of the areas where school districts have recently made cuts. Yet, these cuts may limit access to out of neighborhood schools—which limits students' choices and may impede diversity efforts.

Given persistently high levels of housing segregation in suburban regions, transportation is a critical tool to helping districts create integrated schools.

## Intra-district Integration Efforts

Traditionally, most integration efforts have been implemented in a particular district, and these efforts have varied considerably depending on size, racial composition, and a variety of other district factors. There are undoubtedly countless ways in which districts could pursue integration, but we focus on

two major principles that suburban districts have utilized to promote diversity: (1) using geographical zoning and (2) school choice.

## Geography/Zoning

Zoning is one of the tools used by almost all school districts with more than one school at a given grade level. Zones are the geographic areas that correspond to a particular school. In some cases, districts may design zones that are “non-contiguous” to intentionally draw students from different parts of the district to the same school. One of the common ways in which zones are used involves “neighborhood schools” plans, which traditionally assign students to their closest school.

Because of issues related to school capacity and staffing, districts must carefully consider the demographics of their district (e.g., the number of school-aged children) as they draw zones to make sure they do not assign more students to a school than it can handle. Many districts, in an effort to pursue diversity, have also added a consideration of the racial and economic characteristics of students living within zones. Technological advances in understanding and projecting population changes can aid districts that wish to do so.

More recent use of geography to promote diversity has involved two major trends: (1) geographically expansive zones and (2) considerably smaller zones. The use of geographically expansive zones is a way to divide up districts into sub-sections, within which, for example, a district might give students priority to attend any school. Drawing zones that are roughly equivalent in size and distributing students evenly along lines of race and class are important considerations in this method.

The use of smaller zones, or “small-scale” geography, is relatively recent and is used by districts in varying ways. Commonly, a set of neighborhood blocks is labeled by the district as a unit (Wake



County, North Carolina calls these units “nodes,” for example, while Berkeley, California refers to theirs as “planning areas”). In some instances, these smaller units then are assigned to schools. Other districts replaced their consideration of a student’s diversity characteristics (such as race) with the diversity of the smaller unit (such as racial, economic and educational attainment). In this type of use, a district’s goal is usually to have a mix of students from different types of neighborhoods in each school instead of having a mix of students from different races. This allows districts to consider diversity without considering an individual student’s race, and is a way to comply with the *Seattle/Louisville* decision prohibiting consideration of individual racial status.

Finally, considering geography in the “siting” of new schools, or even in the closing of older schools, is an important way in which a district can make decisions that are informed by the geographical distribution of students. There is historical precedent: during court-ordered desegregation cases, districts were often required to prove that the

proposed construction of new schools would not further segregation. And today, it continues to make educational—and financial—sense to consider beforehand whether a new school could be located in an area that would naturally integrate the school, rather than in a location that would require extensive busing in order to create a racially and economically diverse student body.

### *School Choice & Magnet Schools*

Magnet schools are the largest set of choice-based schools in the nation. Magnets were originally designed to incorporate strong civil rights protections (such as outreach to a diverse group of families, explicit desegregation goals, and free transportation) and most were established without selective admissions processes. Importantly, this differs from more recent schools of choice that have been designed without these civil rights mechanisms. As the Supreme Court began limiting the extent of desegregation remedies in the 1970s, a subsequent growth in magnet schools occurred. The federal government began to provide funding for the establishment of new magnet programs, a policy that combined desegregation, innovation, and parental choice.

Today, thousands of magnet schools continue to serve students across the country, even while the mission of magnet schools has shifted considerably from its historical focus on racial desegregation. Stagnant funding and a move away from race-conscious desegregation efforts in both federal policy and judicial decision-making may account for some of the shifts in magnet priorities. Yet many of the changes may have important implications for levels of diversity. For example, schools with desegregation goals and special outreach are more likely to be substantially integrated or experiencing increasing integration. Further, demand for slots in magnets schools is more likely to increase among all

groups of parents if magnets have some desegregation goals and also specific outreach to prospective students. Transportation (discussed above) has also been an important provision of magnet schools, specifically to ensure that everyone who chooses what might be out-of-neighborhood schools is able to attend. As a result, magnets that do provide free transportation are less likely to be racially isolated.

With their ability to draw students across attendance lines and district boundaries, magnet schools present real possibilities for integration in the suburbs. The concept of regional magnets, located on the borders between city and suburban school systems (or on the border of an inner suburb with a nonwhite population near the city boundary and a predominately white population further out) represents a metropolitan strategy for desegregation. Suburban students attending regional magnet programs reap the many benefits of racial diversity, while urban students are presented with increased educational opportunity and access to more advantaged social networks, as well as to the social gains associated with integration.

The following examples highlight suburban magnet program efforts to produce racially diverse learning environments.

### **Magnets in Hamilton County, Tennessee**

Hamilton County, Tennessee (which includes the city of Chattanooga and its surrounding suburbs) opened its first magnet schools in 1994. The magnet program began as a way to diversify schools in the district—aided by a waiting list that took race into consideration in order to foster integration. Roughly 1500-1800 new magnet school applications come in each year to fill 700-800 new seats at schools; 4000 students are in the magnet program overall. In recent years, some district magnet programs have moved towards a lottery system with no controls for racial diversity, though they now take socioeconomic balance into account (a decision prompted

by federal funding guidelines). Racial imbalance has increased under the new policies. Conversely, magnet programs in the county choosing not take federal funds achieve better diversity because they were able to consider racial diversity.

In Hamilton County, magnet schools currently only provide transportation to students within their neighborhood zone. With funding from a prior federal grant cycle, the district was able to have a number of central “drop-off” points where students could then be transported to different zones. After a change in transportation policy, however, high performing magnets are still popular with out of zone families, but other magnets have become more neighborhood-based, replicating patterns of residential segregation. Chattanooga’s recent downtown revitalization effort has, however, prompted some low-income housing development in the suburbs, diversifying suburban schools in the process.

Diversity efforts in the district are now driven by socioeconomic status (SES), which has helped ensure SES balance, but not necessarily racial integration. Hamilton County attempts to draw magnet school zones for popular programs that are socioeconomically diverse, in addition to considering SES (instead of race) in its waiting list procedures.

District officials note a racial divide between urban magnet school zones with higher concentrations of students of color and predominately white suburban zones. Because suburban magnets are competing with private schools for students, there is some sense that the district is placing more emphasis on improving the quality of suburban schools at the expense of urban ones through different faculty hiring practices and more resource allocations. Yet, in a positive development, the district recently built a new school in the growing suburbs and made a conscious decision to draw its zone in a way that would allow for more racial diversity.

In sum, Hamilton County magnets underwent several key shifts in policy over the years, moving from a waiting list system to a strict lottery, from broad-based transportation to limited service, and from a race-conscious plan to a race-neutral one. While these changes may be associated with decreased racial diversity at magnet schools – along with the concern that resources are being unevenly distributed to city and county magnets – the county is still moving forward in a new legal and policy context to foster diversity. Through the implementation of SES-based diversity plans, as well as the use of zoning to promote integration, the district continues to work towards a vision of diverse schooling.

### Magnet Programs in Yonkers, New York

Yonkers, a suburban school district in New York, is in its second year of a three year funding cycle administered by the federal Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP). The suburban school system has seen growth in all of its magnet programs over the past few years. Each year, district officials select three magnet schools to re-vamp and determine whether the theme of those particular schools is still relevant and effective (i.e. still “magnetic”). The district has created innovative programs that promote school community, exhibit diversity, and improve the lives and education of the students. Magnet schools in Yonkers have also seen large gains in student performance over time, though some programs in under-resourced neighborhoods (e.g. areas of concentrated poverty) are still underperforming in relation to other schools. Still, overall academic achievement in the programs is high and increasing.

In order to provide free, safe transportation to students attending Yonkers’ magnets, district leaders add transportation costs to grant applications, in addition to establishing a 1.5 mile cut-off, so any student who lives within 1.5 miles of a school must provide their own transportation. This policy is an

incentive for families to opt for schools outside of their neighborhood, to which free transportation is provided. The district also requires high school magnet students to purchase bus passes for the city metro transportation, with some financial aid available for families below the poverty line. Transportation is also included in outreach efforts. Once a student enrolls, the district provides bus transportation to families once a month for parent nights—helping to address an important barrier to parent involvement in schools.

Through constant evaluation of efforts to provide free transportation and extensive outreach to all families in the district, Yonkers continues to effectively use magnet programs to facilitate diversity within its suburban schools.

### Concluding Thoughts on Magnets

Magnet programs nationwide have been associated with improved academic and social outcomes for students. They remain one of the oldest voluntary integration strategies and, as a result, have a proven track record of success in promoting racial diversity. Magnet programs remain a popular, effective tool for suburban school districts to promote diversity, with the understanding that civil rights considerations like transportation and outreach are vitally important components of a successful magnet program. As we’ve described here, there is considerable variation and flexibility in the way that districts implement their magnet schools in order to aid the districts’ goals. As school choice continues to grow in popularity, suburban districts should consider how magnet schools could help districts pursue diversity while also providing families with school choice options.



## Inter-district Integration Efforts

Because such a great extent of segregation exists across boundary lines, in a number of areas around the country, suburban districts have partnered with city districts to construct policies that draw students across boundary lines. We focus on two such efforts here: (1) inter-district magnet schools and (2) inter-district transfer programs.

### *Connecticut's Inter-district Magnet Schools*

Regional magnets in Connecticut are the product of a decades-old lawsuit that was handed down by the state Supreme Court. Based on a violation of state law decreeing that Connecticut's students had a fundamental right to an education (language found in many state constitutions but notably missing from our national document), judges ruled that Connecticut had an affirmative duty to provide equal educational opportunity to students. While this 1996 state Supreme Court ruling represented a landmark judicial victory, the Connecticut legislative and executive branches were charged with the actual implementation of the remedy for the state's schoolchildren. Years passed before the resulting inter-district magnet programs enrolled substantial numbers of central city students.

Today, the popular and over-subscribed inter-district magnets and city-suburban transfer program are working to meet the demand of at least 80% of the programs' yearly applicants by 2012-13. In other words, in a few short years there should be enough regional magnet spaces to accommodate at least 80% of the students who apply. The ultimate goal of the plan is to provide *all* interested students with the opportunity to attend an integrated educational setting. Research on the Connecticut magnet programs finds they do in fact give participating students the opportunity to experience more integrated environments compared to surrounding

schools in the city and suburbs. Suburban students benefit from a wide range of academic and social opportunities provided by the diverse schools. For example, inter-district magnet high schools present students with educational environments more conducive to learning and cross-cultural understanding, in addition to positive effects on academic achievement. Though the scope of the gains so far are modest, Connecticut is developing additional regional magnet programs in several cities and suburbs across the state -- in addition to the Hartford region -- that could be one path to a better, less segregated future.

### *Inter-district Transfer Programs vs. Open Enrollment Programs*

Recent education policy attempts, such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), have aimed to improve the African American-white and Latino-white achievement gap by employing strict consequences for schools that fail to meet adequate yearly progress. While there are numerous consequences for schools that fail to meet NCLB guidelines, one option for students and their families is to transfer to a higher-performing school. However, estimates suggest that quite low percentages of families with children in low-performing schools utilize this option. Part of the problem is that there is no incentive or mandate for high-performing schools to accept students from low-performing schools, so the responsibility is left to families to transport their children to high-performing schools.

One alternative to current federal policy that has proven to be successful and popular is inter-district transfer programs. Inter-district transfer programs, which grew out of the Civil Rights Movement, focus on increasing access and opportunities to students who have been historically marginalized due to race/ethnicity and/or socio-economic status. They also have traditionally been a way to diversify

overwhelmingly white and/or affluent suburban schools. The purpose of these programs is to provide greater racial and/or socio-economic diversity in both suburban and urban schools and to improve students' outcomes.

There are inter-district transfer programs all over the country. The eight largest and most well known are in Boston, Minneapolis, Milwaukee, St. Louis, Indianapolis, Rochester, Hartford, and East Palo Alto. All transfer students of color and low-income students to suburban schools. For each of these programs, suburban district involvement is either required or strongly encouraged. Each district's administration monitors, organizes, and recruits students of color, and each program offers state-supported free transportation, which is pivotal to their success. St. Louis, for example, has one of the largest inter-district choice programs in the country with approximately 12,000 students from urban communities attending suburban schools. The program originally started as part of a court-ordered racial desegregation plan in 1981, but due to positive academic outcomes of the program and a great deal of community and business leader support, the program was continued on a voluntary basis in 1999. Part of the success of St. Louis' program is due to strong levels of support from a coordinating body that helps recruit, place, and counsel students and their families in the program. Another of the eight transfer programs, Milwaukee, has the third largest program with approximately 6,000 students participating in "The Choice is Your Program." Milwaukee's transfer program began in 1976 as a state court order and in 1979 the city was under federal court order. Similar to St. Louis' program, Milwaukee offers strong



levels of support from program administrators and human relations coordinators, as well as a multicultural curriculum and school-community liaisons.

Research has found a positive relationship between participation in these programs and the academic achievement of African American and Latino students. Most notably, these programs have narrowed the African American-white and Latino-white achievement gap. Furthermore, in each of these programs there was an improvement in racial attitudes, particularly among white students, along with an increased desire among students of color to attend college. For example, in St. Louis, transfer students had both higher test scores and were nearly twice as likely to go to either a two-year or four-year university compared to graduates of the high schools that did not take part in the transfer program. Also, students who participated in these programs spoke of the benefits of increased knowledge regarding college entrance exams and test prep courses, scholarship programs, internships and jobs, which students said they never would have had access to had they not transferred to suburban schools.

In many cases, the longer suburban residents, educators, and school officials participated in these programs, the more they grew to appreciate them. Today, support for many of the transfer programs is solid and continues to grow in popularity, not only among participants living in urban communities, but among those living in the suburbs as well. Many of these programs have become so successful that demand often far exceeds supply. For example, in 2007-08, St. Louis had just over 3,500 applicants for approximately 1,200 openings. These trends are similar in nearly each of the eight largest inter-

district desegregation transfer programs in the country. One of the reasons transfer programs have been so successful in garnering suburban support is because many suburban districts receive financial compensation for participation, providing the equivalent of their average per-pupil expenditure for resident students. This is true for programs in St. Louis, Milwaukee, Indianapolis, and Rochester. If adequately funded, inter-district transfer programs offer numerous academic and social benefits to students in both urban and suburban communities.

### *Non-desegregation focused transfer programs*

While inter-district transfer programs have proven to be academically and socially beneficial for students in both urban and suburban communities, currently intra-district/inter-district open enrollment programs are growing more rapidly. Central to the idea of open enrollment programs is competition and choice. There are two types of open enrollment policies. *Intra*-district open enrollment policies allow students to transfer to another school within a students' school district. *Inter*-district open enrollment policies allow a student to transfer to a school district outside of a students' home district.

The goal behind inter-district open enrollment policies is to force districts to compete for students and state funds. Unlike inter-district transfer programs focused on integration, many open enrollment programs lack transportation services—which limits the ability of some students to transfer—and suburban districts often have complete control in deciding which students the district will enroll. Furthermore, open enrollment programs often have weak (or no) diversity guidelines and lack sufficient oversight compared to the inter-district desegregation transfer programs described above. Furthermore, there might be a financial disincentive for districts in affluent areas to accept students

outside of the district because districts receive state per pupil expenditures, leaving it up to the receiving district to make up the difference in the funding of the transferring student. Essentially, open enrollment policies are race neutral and fail to make racial diversity an explicit goal. As a result, they fail to significantly reduce school racial segregation. Nevertheless, open enrollment programs have grown from serving approximately 200,000 students in 1993-94 to over 480,000 students in 1999-2000.

One of the largest inter-district open enrollment programs in the country was recently adopted in Omaha, Nebraska in an attempt to address the shift from *within* school district segregation to *between* district segregation. Omaha's program is unique and may potentially offer important lessons.

Omaha's Learning Community was created by the Nebraska Legislature. It requires that the city develop an inter-district open enrollment plan that creates a socio-economic based desegregation strategy for all 11 districts in order to increase diversity. The program is funded by a tax-sharing plan that consolidates the 11 school districts into a shared metropolitan tax base. The goal of the diversity plan is to increase the socio-economic diversity of enrollment at each grade level and at every school until enrollment reflects the *socio-economic* diversity of the Learning Community. Part of what makes Omaha's program noteworthy is the support and commitment of each of the 11 school districts taking part in the program. In addition to this broad support, funding is derived from a tax-sharing plan that merges the 11 districts into a shared metropolitan tax base rather than being funded by the state, a source which could be threatened during an economic decline. Finally, there is a regional governing council responsible for implementing Omaha's plan and overseeing the construction of new inter-district schools and support centers in low-income areas.

Since the Learning Community is still in the process of being fully implemented, questions of effectiveness and success have not yet been answered. Initial concerns that have been raised include the fact that Omaha's plan offers weak oversight or sanctions if a district does not meet the expectations of the Learning Community. The law also lacks specific targets and timelines and fails to create repercussions if a district does not meet diversity guidelines. Additionally, the law focuses solely on socio-economic diversity and fails to include racial diversity as a specific target. Because some programs focused solely on socio-economic diversity have failed to increase racial diversity, it will be important to monitor whether Omaha is able to also produce racially diverse schools. Despite these somewhat unresolved issues, this remains a promising model to watch.

## Conclusion

This chapter describes several possible avenues that suburban districts could consider in order to pursue diversity. These approaches are varied; some occur within district boundaries while others cross such boundaries. The chapter also highlights the importance of considering how the provision of transportation impacts the many dimensions of integration and access. In the next chapter, we take a look at specific examples of districts implementing these types of policies in both race-conscious and race-neutral ways. These districts exemplify the fact that no one approach fits all, and a district interested in diversity should consider all the policy alternatives described here.

## Further reading:

**Chavez, L. & Frankenberg, E.** (2009). *Integration Defended: Berkeley Unified's Strategy to Maintain School Diversity*. UCLA: The Civil Rights Project. Available at: <http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/integration-defended-berkeley-unified2019s-strategy-to-maintain-school-diversity/>

**Frankenberg, E. & Siegel-Hawley, G.** (2008). *The Forgotten Choice: Magnet Schools in a Changing Landscape*. Los Angeles: UCLA Civil Rights Project. Available at: <http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/the-forgotten-choice-rethinking-magnet-schools-in-a-changing-landscape/>

**Holme, J.J. & Wells, A.S.** (2008). "School Choice Beyond District Borders: Lessons for the Reauthorization of NCLB from Inter-district Desegregation and Open Enrollment Plans." In Richard Kahlenberg (Ed.) *Improving on No Child Left Behind*. New York, NY: The Century Foundation.

**Holme, J. Mansfield, K. & Diem, S.** (2009). *Using Regional Coalitions to Address Socioeconomic Isolation: A Case Study of the Omaha Metropolitan Agreement*. Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice Report. Available at: [http://www.charleshamiltonhouston.org/assets/documents/publications/OmahaMetroAgreement\\_Smaller.pdf](http://www.charleshamiltonhouston.org/assets/documents/publications/OmahaMetroAgreement_Smaller.pdf)

**Wells, A, Baldrige, B., Duran, J., Grzesikowski, R., Roda, A., Warner, M, & White, T.** (2009). *Boundary Crossing for Diversity, Equity and Achievement: Inter-District School Desegregation and Educational Opportunity*. Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice Report. Available at: [http://www.tc.columbia.edu/i/a/document/11666\\_Wells\\_Final\\_wBleeds.pdf](http://www.tc.columbia.edu/i/a/document/11666_Wells_Final_wBleeds.pdf).

*See also fact sheets in appendix.*



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***Magnet and inter-district  
programs nationwide have  
been associated with  
improved outcomes  
for students.***

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## Part Four

# DISTRICT INTEGRATION EXPERIENCES

Having reviewed previously the legal landscape within which districts are operating, and having discussed generally the types of policies that districts could implement to promote racial integration, we now turn to actual examples of what districts are *doing* to pursue diversity. The districts profiled here have each voluntarily chosen to pursue diversity. They represent a variety of suburban demographic contexts in terms of size and racial composition and demonstrate the range of policy options available to districts. These districts utilize several popular methods to pursue integration: magnet schools, zoning, and conceiving of diversity in terms of a student's neighborhood composition.

We first profile three districts employing race-conscious integration policies that appear to comply with the *Seattle/Louisville* decision. Berkeley, California, Louisville, Kentucky, and Montclair, New Jersey have all recently revised their plan to meet state or federal restrictions on race-conscious policymaking. In some instances, these changes are too recent to be able to provide much evidence of how effective they are, but they suggest potential ideas for other districts to consider.

We then profile two districts that have implemented race-neutral student assignment methods to pursue diversity. Rock Hill, South Carolina and Cambridge, Massachusetts are two districts implementing approaches without using race.

## BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

### FACTS:

**Total Number of Schools:** 16

**Total Students (District):** 8,922

**Asian/Pacific Islander Students:** 7.1%

**African American, Non-Hispanic Students:** 25.8%

**Hispanic Students:** 16.6%

**White, Non-Hispanic Students:** 30.5%

**Multiple Races/No Response:** 18.7%

**Free/Reduced Lunch:** 40.5%

*(Data from 2008-09 School Year)*

### COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS:

Berkeley, California is a multiracial suburban community located in the San Francisco Bay Area. The district, home to the University of California's flagship campus, is known as a wealthy, liberal enclave. The district, however, is actually a place of extreme economic and racial segregation, with a sizeable share of low-income African American and Latino residents concentrated in the district near Oakland.

### HISTORY OF INTEGRATION EFFORTS:

Berkeley Unified has voluntarily implemented desegregation plans for more than four decades. In the 1990s, California passed Proposition 209 banning governmental preference for race/ethnicity. In 2003, a conservative legal foundation challenged Berkeley's integration plan. This lawsuit helped revive earlier discussions about altering the existing student assignment policy, and in 2004, the district adopted an innovative integration plan. Berkeley's 2004 plan had the advantage of maintaining a

number of similarities to its preceding plan, which may have helped garner support and minimize disruption in the implementation of the new plan. The plan primarily applies to the elementary schools; there is just one large high school in Berkeley Unified.

### GOALS OF THE PLAN:

The aim of the plan is to have a mix of students from each of the diversity codes in all of the district's 11 elementary schools.

### STUDENT ASSIGNMENT FACTORS & MECHANICS OF THE PLAN

Berkeley's plan is a managed choice plan, in which families submit school choices and the school district considers these preferences and other factors (usually diversity of schools) in making final assignments. Berkeley's plan was a pioneering one in its use of geography on two different levels and in defining diversity by using race in combination with other socio-economic factors. The school district is divided into three zones that run from the northeast to the southwest part of the district. These zones divide the enrollment and school capacity into roughly equivalent thirds. Families have priority when they select schools within their zone. The district then further divides the entire district into "planning areas," which are 4-8 blocks in size. Census and district data are used to assign each zone a diversity code based on the composition of residents in a planning area. The characteristics considered are educational attainment, household income, and percentage of non-white students. Berkeley also incorporates a range of different policies and procedures to make sure information is available to families about all choices and to insure that families have opportunity to choose among all schools. They also have paid attention to promoting equity between schools and to making all school choices attractive.

### TRANSPORTATION:

Transportation is provided to students who live more than 1.5 miles from their assigned school.

### SUCCESS OF PLAN:

It appears that Berkeley's plan has been relatively successful in its goals of integrating students and granting families' choices. Students are currently more evenly distributed by race/ethnicity than by economic status in the district's elementary schools. During the 2008-09 school year, the white and Asian percentage of students at each elementary school was within ten percentage points of the overall district average; two schools varied more than ten percentage points for Latino student composition and one varied for African American students. In 2008-09, more than three-quarters of new kindergarten students received their first choice school. Further, majorities of families matriculated into Berkeley Unified across race/ethnicity regardless of whether they received their first choice school or not.

In 2009, the California Supreme Court declined to hear an appeal of the appellate court's decision that found Berkeley's integration plan to be constitutional and not in violation of Proposition 209. This suggests that Berkeley might be a helpful model for other districts who seek to pursue integration and comply with the limitations of the *Seattle/Louisville* decision.

## JEFFERSON COUNTY, KENTUCKY (METROPOLITAN LOUISVILLE)

### FACTS:

**Total Number of Schools:** 174

**Total Students (District):** 95,871

**Asian/Pacific Islander Students:** 2.4%

**African American, Non-Hispanic Students:** 36.2%

**Hispanic Students:** 4.6%

**White, Non-Hispanic Students:** 53.5%

**Free/Reduced Lunch:** 55.1%

*(Data from 2007-08 School Year):*

### COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

Louisville, Kentucky is part of the Jefferson County Public School (JCPS) district, which is a

county-wide school district encompassing the city of Louisville and some of the surrounding suburbs. The Jefferson County school district formed from the merger of three school districts during the 1970s as part of a court-ordered desegregation case.

### HISTORY OF INTEGRATION EFFORTS

Newspapers and other documents show the extent to which the community initially vigorously resisted desegregation efforts. However, the district eventually became thoroughly integrated and in 2000, it was released from court oversight of its desegregation efforts. Believing in the importance of integration, the district voluntarily continued to implement its desegregation plan. JCPS was then sued this suit was combined eventually with *Seattle's* before the Supreme Court. The 2007 *Seattle/Louisville* decision struck down Louisville's plan and returned it to the district court to oversee the implementation of a new policy that complied with the Court's guidelines.

The district adopted six priorities that would guide the selection and implementation of a new integration plan: diversity, quality, choice, predictability, stability, and equity. After a series of meetings with outside experts and community forums across the district, the school board unanimously adopted a plan in May 2008 that was first implemented for the 2009-2010 school year (which also allowed some students to be grandfathered in under the existing plan). The plan was challenged, and the district court denied an injunction preventing its operation. The lawsuit challenging the policy was later dropped altogether.

### GOALS OF THE PLAN:

Louisville's plan retained many features similar to its prior plan, and also combines the use of geography and a multidimensional conceptualization of diversity. The old plan sought to have each school enroll between 15 and 50% of students who were African American. The new plan seeks to have between 15 and 50% of students from low-opportunity neighborhoods.

### STUDENT ASSIGNMENT FACTORS & MECHANICS OF THE PLAN

Under its old plan, Louisville was divided into non-contiguous zones, with a preference for choosing within these zones. The new plan has six new zones and uses census data to classify students by the characteristics of the neighborhoods they live in. Low-opportunity neighborhoods are those that have lower educational attainment and household incomes, and higher minority percentage than the district-wide averages. Under its old plan, JCPS had some schools with concentrations of poverty, and the multi-dimensional definition of educational opportunity is aimed to de-concentrate student poverty.

### TRANSPORTATION:

JCPS provides transportation for students who live more than one mile away from their assigned school. With 1,500 vehicles, the district operates one of the nation's largest transportation systems.

### SUCCESS OF PLAN:

It remains too early to assess the success of Louisville's plan, but this example illustrates how a district can adapt parts of its old policy to comply with the 2007 Supreme Court decision. Notably this model shows that it is possible to use geography in a sprawling district combining both city and suburban municipalities.

## MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM, NEW JERSEY

### FACTS:

Total Number of Schools: 11

Total Students (District): 6,067

Asian/Pacific Islander Students: 6%

African American, Non-Hispanic Students: 40.1%

Hispanic Students: 7.6%

White, Non-Hispanic Students: 54%

Free/Reduced Lunch: 17.6%

(Data from 2008-2009 School Year):



### INDIVIDUAL OR NEIGHBORHOOD DEMOGRAPHICS:

Montclair is primarily a residential community with 39,000 residents. It is 12 miles west of New York City and the population is highly diverse, both racially and socio-economically.

### HISTORY OF INTEGRATION EFFORTS:

The magnet school system was originally developed in Montclair to provide racial balance and educational equity. In the 1970's, a group of Montclair parents filed a lawsuit against the Montclair School Board of Education to protest unequal access to educational resources among the township's racially segregated schools, arguing the township's housing patterns created de facto segregation by requiring students to attend their neighborhood school. The New Jersey Commissioner of Education then ordered Montclair to develop a plan to provide racial balance in the schools. Magnet schools in other districts were researched and visited and parents provided input on the structure of the schools. In September of 1977, the district's first magnet school opened to draw white students to a school with a majority of students of color. Similarly, a special program was developed at a predominately white school to draw more students of color. Today, Montclair currently has seven elementary, three middle school magnets, and one comprehensive high school.

### GOALS OF CURRENT PLAN:

Ensure racial balance in schools and provide parents and students a variety of magnet schools to choose from.

### STUDENT ASSIGNMENT FACTORS & MECHANICS OF PLAN:

The Montclair School Board of Education recently approved a new student assignment plan in order to comply with the *Seattle/Louisville* decision. The new plan utilizes five factors to assign students to schools: (1) neighborhood racial demographics, (2) percentage of free and reduced lunch students, (3) household poverty rates, (4) median household income, and (5) parental education levels. These five factors

are then calculated at the neighborhood level and given equal weight to create three geographic zones. Kindergarten assignment at each of the district's elementary schools will give preference to students from underrepresented zones in an attempt to promote zone balance. The goal of this plan is to promote racial and socio-economic integration throughout the district in a manner that complies with the *Seattle/Louisville* decision.

### TRANSPORTATION:

Transportation is provided to all children in elementary and middle school who live one mile or further from their school. High school students must live 2.5 miles or further from the high school to be eligible for busing.

### SUCCESS OF PLAN:

While the magnet school system in Montclair seems promising and has been recognized as one of the top six magnet school districts in the country by the U.S. Department of Education, given the recent restructuring of the program and the elimination of race as a factor in its student assignment plan, it is too early to adequately assess the success of the current plan.

## ROCK HILL PUBLIC SCHOOLS, SOUTH CAROLINA

### FACTS

**Total Number of Schools:** 27

**Total Students (District):** 18,000

**Asian/Pacific Islander Students:** 2%

**African American, Non-Hispanic Students:** 36%

**Hispanic Students:** 6%

**Native American:** 2%

**White, Non-Hispanic Students:** 54%

**Free/Reduced Price Lunch:** 52%

*(Data from 2007-08 School Years)*

### INDIVIDUAL OR NEIGHBORHOOD DEMOGRAPHICS:

Rock Hill is the fourth largest city in South Carolina and has a population of 67,000 residents. The community continues to be largely segregated by race, which is one reason why Rock Hill's student assignment plan is so vital to ensuring racial diversity in its schools. The north side is predominately white and Latino, while the south side is largely African American.

### HISTORY OF INTEGRATION EFFORTS:

Rock Hill Public Schools (RHPS) has never been under a court order mandating desegregation, but the year after the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the district began numerous adjustments in student assignment in order to gain approval for the changes from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW). In 1968, 1971, 1973, and 1976, HEW found Rock Hill's student assignment plan failed to adequately address racial segregation. In spite of these findings, HEW dismissed enforcement proceedings against the district in 1977, which allowed the district to claim that it met its legal obligations. The district continued to pay close attention to the racial make-up of its schools and to its desegregation efforts after the 1977 ruling.

Shortly after the school board election in November 2000, the board and Superintendent designed a new student assignment plan that shifted attendance zones in order to increase white enrollment at Sunset Park Elementary, a school attended by predominantly African American students. The elementary plan did not receive any community input and provoked intense debate. This plan led to the formation of Neighborhoods United, a citizen's group opposing the district's new assignment plan and claiming the district was illegally using race as a primary factor in its new plan. In 2003, shortly before the case was set to go to trial, a settlement was reached, allowing the new student assignment plan to continue. It was decided via the settlement that race would not be the primary factor in the assignment of students and that neither racial quotas nor targets would be used.

While the 2002 elementary student assignment plan was being introduced, construction plans were already underway for a new high school in response to Rock Hill's rapidly growing population. While many affluent white residents wanted the new school to be built on the north side of Rock Hill, the board decided to build the school on the south side, a predominantly African American neighborhood. Plans for the building of the new high school and for the district's student assignment plan were developed with the collaboration of a 35-member committee, including representatives from those who were opposed to the elementary reassignment plan. After months of deliberation, this committee assigned several affluent neighborhoods to schools that were not on the north side of town. Despite opposition, the school board approved the plan and while many were angry, there was less political and legal fallout than had been the case in the elementary student assignment plan.

### GOALS OF CURRENT PLAN:

The primary goal of Rock Hill's student assignment plan is to provide "meaningful diversity" by ensuring that schools are not racially isolated. The definition of racial isolation allows a bandwidth of +/- 30 percent of the system-wide racial composition unless a school is 80 percent or more of any one race.

### STUDENT ASSIGNMENT FACTORS:

The district uses satellite zones to avoid racial isolation.

### TRANSPORTATION:

Nearly 8,000 students use transportation provided by the Rock Hill Public School System.

### SUCCESS OF PLAN:

In 2002, the new student assignment plan was proving to be a success since the number of white students in previously minority segregated elementary schools began increasing. By 2006, the number of African American and white students in Rock Hill's elementary schools was nearly equal, with only slightly more African American students than white. Furthermore, the free/reduced priced meal disparity

narrowed dramatically after the new high school was opened. In fact, the percentage of white students on the south side of Rock Hill is now higher than on the north side, a prime example of how RHSD's new high school assignment plan transformed attendance patterns that had existed for more than 30 years.

Although Rock Hill's student assignment plan continues to result in high levels of racial balance, in 2007-2008 there was actually an increase in racial segregation. The African American/white dissimilarity index increased from 12.5 in 2006-2007 to 16.2 in 2007-2008. It increased further in 2008-2009 to 22.5. The increase in racial imbalance is largely due to the opening of two new schools where the African American enrollment was significantly lower than other elementary schools.

## CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

### FACTS

**Year:** 2007-2008

**Total Number of Schools:** 13

**Total Student Population:** 5,682

**Asian/Pacific Islander Students:** 11.2%

**African American, Non-Hispanic Students:** 35.0%

**Hispanic Students:** 14.1%

**White, Non-Hispanic Students:** 36.6%

**Free/Reduced Price Lunch:** 44.9%

### COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS:

Cambridge Public Schools (CPS) comprises a small district located just across the Charles River from Boston, Massachusetts. The site of Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, CPS includes one of the nation's most expensive real estate markets, in addition to a fairly expansive section of subsidized housing. It also boasts a population that is extremely diverse, both racially and socioeconomically. White students comprise just over a third of the district's students, and approximately 45% of CPS students qualify for free and reduced

lunch. Enrollment has been unsteady in the past few years, with a significant decline in the student population followed by a recent rise in the number of kindergarteners.

### HISTORY OF INTEGRATION EFFORTS:

Throughout the 1990s, Cambridge Public Schools operated under a voluntary integration plan that specifically took account of the race of individual students to integrate the Cambridge schools. In 2001, CPS changed its student assignment plan in order to account for many different diversity factors.

### GOALS OF CURRENT PLAN (2001):

The goals of CPS' policy are to provide all students with equitable educational opportunities, improved achievement, and the opportunity to attend school with students of diverse backgrounds. Additionally, according to CPS' policy, the district believes "that it is important to have the option to use race or ethnicity as one of the diversity factors in order to avoid the harms of racial/ethnic isolation and to provide students the benefits of learning from students who are of different racial and ethnic backgrounds."

### STUDENT ASSIGNMENT FACTORS:

Assignment factors include: student/parent choice; socioeconomic status; geographical proximity; sibling attendance, and race. For students in grades K-8, parents rank three choices of schools for each of their children. There is only one comprehensive high school.

CPS uses a variety of diversity factors and assignment preferences in assigning students to schools:

- **Socioeconomic Status:** The goal is for each grade in each school to be within a range of plus or minus 5 percentage points of the district-wide K-8 percentage of students eligible for free and reduced price meals. Currently, board policy aims to have the range plus or minus 10 percentage points of district-wide K-8 socio-economic status (although this changed to fifteen percent for the entering kindergarten class in 2007-08).

- **Siblings and Distance:** To the extent that space is available, that the assignment does not negatively affect the socioeconomic diversity at the school requested, and when requested by parents/guardians, CPS assigns (i) siblings to the same school, and (ii) students to one of the two schools closest to where they reside.

- **Race or Ethnicity:** If, after consideration of the other student assignment factors, the applicant pool for a grade at a school is not within plus or minus 10 percentage points of the district-wide percentage of White, African-American, Latino, Asian and Native-American students in elementary schools, then race or ethnicity will be used as one of the diversity factors. Note: Race has yet to be used in the assignment of any students by CPS since it has adopted its new policy.

- **ELL and Special Education Status:** While CPS does not use English Language Learner status or special education status as part of the diversity index (though the controlled choice policy mentions that these numbers are subject to monitoring), CPS states a goal of having the population of both subsets of students at each school reflect the demographics of the district as a whole.

### **INDIVIDUAL OR NEIGHBORHOOD DEMOGRAPHICS:**

Individual student/family demographics are considered; neighborhood demographics are not.

### **DEMOGRAPHIC DATA COLLECTION:**

The district determines socioeconomic status according to whether or not a student is eligible for free or reduced price lunch. When parents/guardians complete their application form ranking their choices of schools, they can complete a FRL application form. The district determines student race by self-identification on the application form.

### **TRANSPORTATION:**

Students eligible for transportation include all K-6 students who must walk one mile or more, and all 7th and 8th grade students who must walk 1.5

miles or more to their assigned schools. Door-to-door transportation is provided for special needs children. Transportation is also provided to students who qualify for free or reduced price lunch, attend a school where at least 50 percent of the students who live in the school's attendance area and attend the school are poverty students, or attend a focus school.

### **MORE INFO:**

<http://www.cpsd.us/Web/PubInfo/ControlledChoice.pdf>



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***Teachers are among the most important factors affecting relations between students of different racial groups in the classroom.***

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## Part Five

# SUBURBAN TEACHERS AND RACIALLY DIVERSE SCHOOLS

American school enrollment reflects a society in rapid racial transition. Ten states currently have majority-minority student populations, a trend expected to extend nationwide in the next decade. Meanwhile, suburban school districts have become the center of this racial transformation. As the suburbs grow more diverse - and in some cases, more segregated - the need for real and purposeful policy responses becomes ever more urgent. If your suburban community navigates the legal and policy landscape described in prior sections and succeeds in creating diverse schools, then the true work of integration really begins: structuring what happens within these racially diverse schools. In an effort to start addressing a serious void in teacher training and preparation for diverse classrooms, this section of the manual is dedicated to outlining strategies and materials to better support suburban school and district personnel.

With the guiding hand of a seasoned teacher, the opportunity to experience racial diversity in the classroom has positive academic and social benefits for students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds. But while diverse suburban schools may make it possible for students to experience intergroup contact, such opportunities should be carefully constructed according to certain equalizing conditions. For over fifty years, research has confirmed that strong leadership, equal status for group members in a given situation, cooperation and shared goals help facilitate positive interracial relationships.

Teachers, of course, are responsible for designing intergroup experiences within their classrooms. Yet given the segregation and isolation of many teachers'

own educational backgrounds, in addition to an increasingly diverse student population, there is need for more comprehensive training on this topic.

The teaching force overall is much less diverse than the student population. Eighty-five percent of teachers are white compared to roughly 55% of students, and a racially disparate pattern of teacher distribution across schools still persists. While a majority of urban teachers are white, their share of the urban teaching force is disproportionately lower than it is in other locales. African American and Latino teachers are much more likely to teach in urban school districts, while suburban schools employ a teaching force that is 87% white. The disconnect between the racial composition of students and teachers and faculty segregation patterns has important implications for student learning in racially diverse classrooms.

Educators play a fundamentally critical role in shaping the educational experiences of their students. A growing body of knowledge points to the particular importance of strong teaching in racially diverse classrooms. Teachers are among the most important factors affecting relations between students of different racial groups in the classroom. They can set the tone for democratic behavior and model appropriate attitudes for students. Instructors also have the ability to complicate rigid group classification systems - i.e. same skin color versus different skin color - in order to suggest that distinguishing characteristics and gray areas exist within such categories. Further, teaching practices that maximize the opportunity to learn with and from students of other backgrounds can help improve

cross-racial interaction--a key component in breaking down stereotypes and prejudice.

## What is Unique about Teaching in Racially Diverse Classrooms?

Decades of research and experience in racially diverse educational settings show that certain structures and techniques can maximize the academic and social benefits of diversity. Students attending integrated schools are more likely to adopt multiple perspectives and to avoid making artificial assumptions, important components of critical thinking processes. In integrated schools, students of all backgrounds benefit from enhanced classroom discussion, more advanced social and historical thinking, greater commitment to increasing racial understanding, improved racial and cultural awareness, and higher levels of student persistence. As described in an earlier part of this manual, integrated schooling also helps perpetuate other racially diverse experiences: students of all racial backgrounds who attend diverse schools are more likely to attend integrated colleges, live in integrated neighborhoods, have cross-racial friendships and work in higher-status occupations.

Conversely, other teaching practices may exacerbate underlying tensions and/or inequities embedded in diverse learning environments. Our society produces a variety of conflicting messages about race in general, and race and education more specifically, so attempting to untangle the resulting confusion is important for teachers in racially diverse classrooms. Some of the more common "pitfalls" associated with teaching in diverse schools are:

- ♦ *Employing race-neutral strategies to understand difference.* Teachers may attribute differences in student behaviors or modes of learning to cultural patterns or differential socioeconomic status. When teachers consistently minimize or ignore race they run the risk of assuming that all children

will understand and respond to the methods and approaches that teachers are familiar with, an assumption not supported by research and experience.

- ♦ *Deficit thinking.* Attributing learning differences or behaviors to innate or cultural characteristics; and in turn associating those behaviors with a variety of negative outcomes. As such, students' home lives are at risk of being overlooked and de-valued, blocking potentially rich learning opportunities for both students and teachers (see further discussion below).
- ♦ *Spotlighting and ignoring race in the classroom.* Issues of race enter the classroom in a variety of ways. One way to view interactions or thoughts about race in the classroom is to pretend they are located on a continuing spectrum of opportunity. Choose whether to spotlight race or ignore it based on whether the choice will advance educational opportunity for students in the classroom.

## Specific practices for diverse classrooms

How can teachers harness the myriad benefits associated with racially diverse educational settings?

Certain strategies are known to contribute to a positive interracial school and classroom environment. At the school level, administrators and teachers should clearly communicate that diversity is valued. Affirmative and trusting relationships between the school and its families and communities should be established and maintained. Administrators should recognize the importance of preparing teachers for diversity and initiate programming to provide training. High expectations should be set for students in a context of culturally relevant curriculum and teaching practices. Academic levels, like advanced placement, honors and Special Education should be de-emphasized or eliminated completely. At the very least, these levels should not be racially identifiable (e.g. white and Asian students are tracked into more challenging courses while African

American and Latino students are overrepresented in Special Education classes).

In the classroom, grouping students by academic ability level is a widely accepted teaching practice. While there is evidence that students may benefit from short-term placement in homogenous learning groups, particularly in math and literacy, it is important for teachers to be made aware of the potential downsides of ability grouping. Despite the extensive use of ability grouping in classrooms around the country, the practice is not generally supported by research suggesting it as an effective teaching strategy. The stigma attached to a young student placed in a low-achieving group often consigns that same student to lower-level tracks for the duration of his/her school experience. At the middle and high school level, “tracks” replace classroom sorting in elementary schools. Challenging curricula and highly qualified teachers tend to be distributed unevenly to high-performing tracks. As a result of these influences, students may conform to the low or high academic expectations implicit in their group placement. Further, studies that examined the effects of *de-tracking* classes and curriculum find positive academic benefits across all groups of students.

There is an important difference between sorting students by ability and deliberately designing mixed ability student groups. Teachers who are prepared to design effective and racially diverse groups of students, at varying levels of ability, are likely to encourage the development of key critical thinking skills and provide students with an opportunity to coach one another and form cross-racial friendships. Skills that help students think critically and work together harmoniously are becoming increasingly important in our society and will serve students well in future multicultural settings. Research also consistently suggests that well-designed cooperative learning groups increase the academic achievement of students of all ability levels and help form cross-group friendships.

In addition to being able to design mixed ability groups, teacher training specifically addressing the contributions of diverse cultures is an essential part of the consciousness-raising required of many preservice teachers. A deep understanding of the numerous ways American society has been positively influenced by groups of color gives teachers the opportunity to transmit their knowledge and understanding of these contributions to their students. These teachers tend to value their students in a manner befitting the important histories that each brings to the classroom. Some teachers may be inclined to bring to the classroom a “deficit model” of thinking that attributes poor academic achievement to certain cultural characteristics of their students (i.e. family structure, language differences, lack of assimilation into mainstream society). These teachers may try to remedy achievement gaps by dismissing the home cultures and values of their students in favor of the norms of the dominant group. Since students tend to internalize other’s negative perceptions, which leads to lower performance on certain academic tasks, helping teachers’ understand the power of respecting and understanding all of their students is critical.

## Resources for teaching in diverse classrooms and schools

Training is only part of what is needed for successfully structuring diverse learning environments. Without age-appropriate resources that are educationally and culturally relevant, teachers will be hard-pressed to meet the many demands of the job. School-based resources, information, and “human resources,” that is, exemplary models of successful teaching from fellow school professionals, can all supplement training in formal techniques—and may encourage wider use of such practices.



Finding and using appropriate resources that fairly represent the history and cultures of a diverse group of students is a critical component of effective teaching in multiracial classroom environments. Curriculum used in these classrooms should address and maximize the challenges and benefits inherent in bringing students with many different perspectives together. Providing students with examples of people who reflect their own racial or ethnic background is a critical part of both their learning process and identity development. Suburban teachers should be prepared to find and supplement existing curriculum with learning materials that reflect the country's increasingly varied racial and ethnic makeup. Utilizing these multicultural materials can help teachers provide students with role models and examples of the societal contributions of all racial/ethnic groups.

Observing effective teachers in racially diverse classrooms is also a crucial component of professional development for all teachers. Observations serve to dispel any preconceived notions that competent teaching in these classrooms is impossible, in addition to helping teachers envision how good teaching practices for diverse classrooms might look. Engaging fellow teachers – or students, parents, and community members – in discussions about diversity helps challenge viewpoints and sheds light on multiple perspectives about issues in the classroom. As a result, relying on fellow faculty and community members for information about the student population is a valuable and important way to inform the teaching process.

## Conclusion

As suburban school systems around the country grapple with the opportunities and challenges posed by growing racial diversity, school- and district-wide engagement in reflective training, conversation and practice becomes ever more

essential. Indeed, research finds that schools where teachers report the least preparation for diversity are the most likely to experience rapid racial transition and the resulting destabilization of schools and communities. This section of the manual outlined the basic parameters of race-related issues in schools and classrooms, highlighting strategies for harnessing the potential – and avoiding the pitfalls – of diverse learning spaces. We include below a list of further resources for suburban school systems in the midst of racial change.

### Further reading:

**Landsman, J. & Lewis, C.** (2006). *White Teachers / Diverse Classrooms: A Guide to Building Inclusive Schools, Promoting High Expectations, and Eliminating Racism*. Sterling, Virginia: Stylus Publishing.

**Nieto, S.** (2010). *Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education*. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.

**North Central Regional Education Laboratory (NCREL).** *Educating Teachers for Diversity*. Available at: <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/educatrs/presrvce/pe300.htm>

**North Central Regional Education Laboratory (NCREL).** *Addressing Literacy Needs in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Classrooms*. Available at: <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/content/cntareas/reading/li400.htm>

**Pollock, M., Ed.** (2008). *Everyday Antiracism: Getting Real about Race in School*. New York: The New Press.

### Teaching Diverse Learners. Principles for Culturally Responsive Teaching.

Available at: <http://www.alliance.brown.edu/tdl/tl-strategies/crt-principles.shtml>

## The Teaching Diverse Students Initiative (TDSI)

### *The Teaching Diverse Students Initiative*

In 2007, building on its award-winning Teaching Tolerance program, the Southern Poverty Law Center began a continuing, nationwide consultation with scholars, professional organizations and expert educators to identify what educators need to know and be able to do more effectively to enhance the learning opportunities and outcomes of students of color. This effort resulted in the Teaching Diverse Students Initiative (TDSI), the development of a suite of tools for use by educators, colleges of education, and advocates for students that embody interactive multi-media professional development resources that are available on line, without cost, at <http://www.tolerance.org/tdsi>. The resources include video of expert commentary and effective practice, learning activities, and authoritative articles and reports.

TDSI addresses three steps that need to be taken in order to implement race-conscious approaches to school improvement that benefits all students:

- ◆ Develop a better understanding of how race affects teaching and learning and calling into question many beliefs and assumptions which, while often well-meaning, undermine learning opportunities for students of color.
- ◆ Enhance the professional expertise of teachers to engage in practices that are responsive to the racial and ethnic diversity of their students.
- ◆ Create and sustain school-wide policies, practices and cultures that promote the learning of all students, but are particularly important in racially and ethnically diverse schools.

### *Identifying Beliefs that Influence Behavior and Educational Practice*

Commitment to race-conscious strategies for school improvement begins with understanding the influence of race on behavior and knowing about the misconceptions many people have. Three of several lessons TDSI seeks to teach in this regard are:

1. Differences among people to whom we assign racial and ethnic identities have no biological bases and are instead the product of socially constructed beliefs. This means that attributed racial differences can be changed by social action when race-related beliefs disadvantage one group over another.
2. Most of us are not fully aware of our dispositions toward people of races and ethnicities different from our own. Thus, we do not understand how our behavior is seen by others or the extent to which our actions are shaped by latent beliefs. TDSI provides tools for examining one's "hidden beliefs".
3. Despite progress in race relations, there are broad differences in how people of color see their opportunities and the confidence they have that they and their children will experience discrimination.

There are also many beliefs about teaching and learning that are particularly relevant to the opportunities to learn experienced by students of color. These beliefs are sustained because they seem sensible and, in many cases, are well meaning. Four of many examples of potentially non-productive beliefs many teachers hold that are identified and examined in the TDSI learning activities and resources are:

1. A desire to ignore racial differences in order to be fair to all students.
2. An interest in building student self-esteem at the expense of academic rigor.
3. Adapting to students' "learning styles" in ways that limit cognitive development and tend to stereotype.
4. Believing students must have good basic skills before they are asked to engage in more complex learning activities.

## *Race-Aware Pedagogy*

The most significant school-based influence on student learning is the quality of teaching students experience. TDSI focuses attention on the characteristics of teaching that are particularly important to maximize the academic performance of students of color *and* that benefit all students. A sampling of these practices, many of which also define “culturally relevant pedagogy” - which collectively manifest the importance of the interdependence of instructional practice and the development of caring and trustful relationships among students and teachers—are:

- ◆ Respecting and being interested in students’ cultural backgrounds and personal experiences
- ◆ Encouraging *and* supporting student higher-order learning (e.g., engaging students in complex problem solving while developing “basic skills”)
- ◆ Building on students’ prior knowledge, values and experiences
- ◆ Avoiding stereotyping of students (e.g., over-generalizing cultural differences)
- ◆ Using “ability” grouping flexibly and sparingly
- ◆ Adapting instruction to students’ semantics, accents, dialects and language facility
- ◆ Applying rules relating to behavior fairly and sensitively
- ◆ Facilitating learning of challenging material by knowing how to deal with “stereotype threat”
- ◆ Engaging families directly in their children’s learning
- ◆ Understanding and adapting to students’ nonverbal communications

## *Conditions in Schools that are Particularly Important to the Success of Students of Color*

School conditions significantly shape the opportunities, support, and motivation teachers have to effectively teach. This is particularly true about facilitating the learning of students of diverse races and ethnicities. Of course, school structures, processes and cultures also affect student dispositions and their opportunities to learn. These conditions include:

- ◆ Open discussions of issues related to race and ethnicity
- ◆ Shared beliefs that teachers and administrators can significantly influence student motivation and achievement regardless of students’ family and community experiences
- ◆ Targeted professional development for school staff driven by analysis of student performance
- ◆ Student access to and participation in rigorous opportunities to learn, such as honor courses, AP and other experiences that challenge them
- ◆ Curricula that deal with the experiences and cultures of different racial and ethnic groups
- ◆ Policies and support that prohibit tracking and inflexible “ability” grouping
- ◆ Fair and inclusive processes for defining and dealing with inappropriate student behavior
- ◆ Parent engagement strategies that are responsive to racial and ethnic diversity
- ◆ Continual monitoring of progress of different racial and ethnic groups

## Part Six

# From Public Engagement to Political Will: Developing Awareness, Providing Support, and Making Transformation Possible

*I wonder if you'd like to give me input on what a parent is to do when currently living in a poorly performing school district. I'm somewhere between making my kids sacrificial lambs for my morals, and selling out to the 'burbs. Help?*

-- A Parent in Michigan

Public awareness and engagement plays a crucial role in the design and implementation of student assignment plans. Getting people to think and talk about student assignment (and issues related to it) is important, because the beliefs and feelings that people have about it are complex and often not expressed directly. Being aware of the wide variety of concerns about, and aspirations for, student assignment in your community will help ensure that your plan is both well designed and well supported over the long term. Failing to reach this understanding could undermine the success of even the most well designed student assignment plan.

When you begin to think about how to approach community engagement, perhaps one of the most helpful things to do is to put yourself into the shoes of parents in your community. Many parents, like the one quoted above, are silently struggling with decisions related to their child's education. These parents often feel isolated because there are few places for them to honestly and productively discuss issues related to school diversity, equity, and their child's needs. Community engagement efforts can help fill this gap by: 1) connecting parents, organizers, and community members who are grappling

with these issues with one another; 2) providing these constituents opportunities to discuss their experiences and concerns, which are often overlooked or minimized; 3) encouraging them to make informed decisions by providing vital information and resources; and 4) helping them connect the dots between their experiences/concerns and tangible reform possibilities. Listening to the diverse perspectives and lived experiences of local parents early on can help you develop a cohesive and responsive community engagement plan, which will nurture the type of awareness and support you will need to develop and sustain a successful student assignment plan.

When thinking about how to engage your local community, it is also important to recognize that even people who value diversity in K-12 educational settings may not initially support efforts to increase diversity *through student assignment*. Thus, your community engagement efforts must help people understand both why you are seeking to increase diversity in K-12 schools, and how a student assignment plan can help achieve this goal in fair and reasonable ways. As you attempt to raise public awareness, it helps to consistently recognize that student assignment plans can be designed to increase diversity without sacrificing parental discretion and/or frustrating the overall goals of education. The reality is that most people are not fully aware of the research demonstrating the educational benefits that emerge alongside increased diversity (and decreased racial isolation). As a result,

the incorrect belief that student assignment issues are not connected to (or even conflict with) other school improvement efforts is common. Often, people perceive they are being asked to choose between “diversity” and “excellence” in education. A strong community engagement plan can help people move beyond this “either-or” mentality. Sharing information about the educational benefits of diversity can help people appreciate the relationship between student assignment plans and creating higher quality schools. If your district was ever legally required to desegregate, or implemented a poorly designed plan, keep in mind that people in your community may have had negative experiences stemming from this period, which affect the way they presently think and feel about integration. These experiences need to be heard and understood. It helps to clearly explain the differences between modern day integration efforts that are largely voluntary in nature (e.g. magnet schools, controlled choice plans, etc.) and the mandatory methods often employed during court-ordered desegregation. Taking these steps will enable people to be more open minded about student assignment changes.

Purposeful efforts to strengthen public support for integration through student assignment are often also necessary—you may consider involving supportive policymakers and leaders in this process. Part of this requires building a collective understanding of how student assignment plans that seek to increase diversity are rooted in equity, and why equity is an important goal for a school district to



strive toward. The Berkeley Unified School District describes the theory behind its student assignment policy in this way: “[C]hoosing or attending one school rather than another will confer neither significant advantage nor disadvantage to pupils enrolled at any individual site.” This simple statement sends a powerful, but rarely stated, message to the public: district leaders are aware of how student assignment can affect schools and they will take steps to ensure that the district’s student assignment plan does not frustrate its goal of providing a quality education to every student. When working on student assignment issues within a school district that is less direct about, or less committed to, pursuing equity through student assignment, your community engagement efforts should help bring issues of equity into the public discussion. State-level educational leaders and policymakers could potentially help you accomplish this. Of course, it is always important to continue emphasizing the educational benefits that

diverse learning environments offer all children (See Part I to learn more about the benefits of diversity).

There are many helpful examples of how community engagement efforts assist communities and school districts in building and sustaining public support for integration. Perhaps the strongest and most consistent example of community engagement is happening in Connecticut. There, a diverse group of parents, citizens, and educators called the Sheff Movement Coalition works to increase public awareness about voluntary integration efforts made possible by a 1996 state court decision. (The Coalition is named for the lead plaintiff in the case,

Elizabeth Sheff and her son, Milo). The Coalition, which relies heavily on volunteers, keeps people informed through its online mailing list and by holding public events. Members regularly speak to media and/or policymakers about the value of integrated educational settings. The Coalition also creates videos and informational brochures. For example, in 2008 the Coalition worked with researchers from the University of Connecticut to survey residents' public awareness of, and support for, the state's efforts to reduce racial isolation in its schools. Importantly, the voices of parents whose children attend, or have attended, integrated schools play a prominent role in the Sheff Movement Coalition's work. These stories allow other parents to learn what to expect if they choose to participate in Connecticut's voluntary integration programs in Connecticut.

While there are surely benefits to keeping members of the public engaged on issues related to student assignment and diversity on an ongoing basis, it may not be feasible or necessary for you. Other communities increase awareness and engagement around integration less frequently, mostly when their local school districts are grappling with issues related to student assignment. Here are some recent examples of community engagement efforts, along with some commonly used tools and tips:

## Community Meetings

Community meetings allow people to get information about student assignment and engage in open conversations about the role school integration plays in education. It is important to structure community meetings in a way that enables people to actively participate. It is also helpful to remember that people will experience a range of emotions while talking about student assignment. Be prepared for potentially difficult situations by thinking about how you will respond to challenging



situations and what additional support you may need. Using outside facilitators who are neutral and not attached to any one side of an argument may be helpful. When planning community meetings, remember that the voices and viewpoints heard most often are not always representative of how people in your community think and feel about student assignment. Some of your hardest and most important work may to bring more people into the discussion. Work to ensure that everyone in your community feels welcome to participate by being strategic about the time and location of meetings, providing free childcare, holding multiple meetings, and offering translation services.

Working with a local organization or university-based center that is familiar with issues related to education and K-12 integration can also help you engage the public, especially when school districts lack resources and/or the desire to wrestle with broader, more difficult issues that relate to student

assignment. Local organizations and universities often have a wealth of helpful resources (e.g. research and data, faculty/staff with subject-matter expertise, volunteer staffing, meeting space, equipment, financial resources, etc.) that may not otherwise be available. Because they are less directly involved in the process than school districts and community groups, another benefit to working with outside groups is that they can help keep the conversation moving forward, even when it seems stuck. For example, following the Boston Public Schools' unsuccessful attempt to redraw district boundaries in 2009, three civil rights groups hosted a summit for district officials and concerned community members to learn about national student assignment models and potentially helpful local resources. The groups also compiled a list of related resources and posted them online, increasing public access to important information.

## Surveys, Focus Groups, and Living Room Dialogues

Organizers and district officials in Louisville, KY and Montclair, NJ have recently used focus groups and surveys to understand more about the beliefs people in their communities held about student assignment and integration. For example, surveys asked:

- ◆ how strongly people supported the neighborhood school concept
- ◆ to what extent they valued choice in education (including whether they would consider sending their child to a magnet school and what types of schools would be appealing to them)
- ◆ the amount of time they considered reasonable for students to spend traveling on buses
- ◆ whether, and to what extent, they considered integration to be an important value in educating children in the 21st century
- ◆ which types of diversity people considered to

be important (e.g. racial/ethnic, socioeconomic, parental education levels, standardized test performance levels, etc.)

- ◆ whether, and how, people felt that their communities benefitted from existing magnet schools
- ◆ if people were surprised to learn about continued levels of racial isolation in their community's housing patterns

When using these tools, take steps to ensure that you are adequately documenting the process and the viewpoints that emerge. During focus groups you might consider assigning multiple note-takers to document conversations, getting permission to use cameras and/or voice recorders so that you can summarize common themes and opinions more accurately afterwards, and using exit surveys. Some of these tools, while helpful, may also prevent people from openly sharing their opinions, so choose the tools that are most appropriate given your goals and local context. When using surveys, consider in advance how you will collect data and whether you have the capacity to analyze it well. Remember, too, that unless you take steps to ensure that you receive survey responses that capture the diversity in your community, your survey results may not capture important viewpoints in your community and/or could give you an inaccurate idea of what people want and believe.

Following their focus groups, organizers in Montclair, NJ also planned to coordinate living room dialogues. Over the course of several weeks, groups of 10-12 people would meet for several hours. These more informal conversations were designed to help community members (including high school students) begin to better understand diverse perspectives and express their beliefs and ideas to one another. If you are interested in using living room dialogues, be sure that a diversity of viewpoints are represented and that the host has the tools and skills he/she needs to create a safe space in which

participants feel comfortable engaging in open and honest dialogue.

## Using and/or Creating Print and Video Resources

You might consider using outside resources, such as videos and/or books, to help begin and/or deepen discussions about student assignment. Doing so may enable community members to think about school integration and student assignment in new and less threatening ways, keeping people engaged in the issues over a longer period of time. While there are only a few resources that are closely related to student assignment, here are a handful of ideas from which you might draw (see “Further Reading” section for availability of these resources):

- ♦ Written by Sandra Tsing Loh, *Mother on Fire* tells the story of a mother’s search for a suitable kindergarten for her four-year-old daughter. As she considers all of her options (from competitive private institutions to public and magnet schools), she describes the stress and panic involved in finding the ideal school.
- ♦ The documentary film series *Race: Power of an Illusion* explores the meaning and implications of race. It calls attention to the underlying social, economic, and political conditions that construct opportunity and advantage. The series attempts to shift conversation from “diversity” and respecting cultural difference to building a more just and equitable society.
- ♦ Another documentary, *What’s Race Got To Do With It* (which builds on *Skin Deep*, a 1995 documentary with a similar story line), follows students who are participating in a 16-week intergroup dialogue program. The film explores issues related to diversity at the college level (e.g. underrepresentation, the limitations of multiculturalism, equity and affirmative action). The movie demonstrates how sustained dialogue can gradually lead to attitudinal change, as students in the film acknowledge and work through their differences and prejudices.

- ♦ Creating your own resources can also capture the story of your community in powerful ways. For example, when members of the Montclair, NJ parents association began to realize that support for the district’s all-magnet structure was weakening, they created a video to explain its history. They interviewed men and women who shared memories of housing and school segregation in Montclair during the 1960s, and described Montclair’s historical struggle to confront racism and inequality in the 1970s, explaining how parents and educators came to decide on a voluntary desegregation plan, converting all its schools into magnets. Today, the district still boasts that “the term ‘neighborhood school’ no longer exists in Montclair; the entire township is the neighborhood for every school. . . . What started as a desegregation plan has turned into a true system of choice.” The video, *Our Schools, Our Town*, was used to help get people talking during focus groups and living room dialogues hosted by community organizers.
- ♦ Another video resource that might help deepen your community’s discussion about student assignment is called *An Elementary Education*. This parent-produced documentary explores how people think about and perceive “neighborhood schools” that serve high numbers of low-income students and students of color. The film features interviews with parents, educators, and community members who discuss their thoughts and perceptions of Columbine Elementary School, a school that serves mostly low-income and Latino students, despite being situated in the mostly affluent and white town of Boulder, CO. This film may be useful to engage community members in discussions about the value of diversity, and how assumptions about school quality affect schools.

## Community-wide Dialogue (Study Circles)

Recognizing redistricting to be one of the most difficult issues facing school districts, educators in Portsmouth, NH joined with civic groups to organize “study circles” in 2001 to get community



input on student assignment. The decision to use study circles followed two controversial redistricting attempts in the 1990s. Working with a local university and a nonprofit organization, eight groups of 12-15 participants (mostly parents but also including leaders and other community members) met once a week for four weeks, tasked with the question: “What issues and criteria should the Portsmouth School’s Redistricting Committee consider in balancing enrollments in our three elementary schools?” Because one of Portsmouth’s main goals in these community deliberations was to bring new voices to the table, organizers worked hard to involve parents, community leaders, and policymakers from all around the district. Organizers engaged parents from different schools in dialogue with one another, holding at least one study circle session at each of the three schools to be affected by the redistricting. District organizers gave parents and other participants an opportunity to tour every school and meet its leaders. This allowed participants to explore and confront their own stereotypes



and assumptions about the schools, students, and parents involved. When it came time for participants to develop student assignment guidelines and recommendations, district leaders noted that many parents were less inclined to elevate the interests of their own children, focusing more on the needs of all children in the community. Unlike the district’s previous redistricting attempts, community members voiced little opposition to the new plan. Using the community-wide dialogue approach can be more time intensive than holding focus groups and community meetings, but it may be helpful in places where past redistricting attempts failed or were highly charged. It can also lead to future community engagement on school issues, as happened in 2006 when educators in Portsmouth were deciding where to locate a new middle school. Particularly when school districts treat the student assignment redesign process as an opportunity to achieve longer-term and deeper structural transformation, the study circles model can help educators achieve multiple goals, including: 1) increasing capacity for ongoing parent and community participation; 2) engaging in a deliberative process that can bring new considerations into view and potentially shift the views of those involved; 3) building a culture of participation and open communication about difficult issues; and 4) resolving issues and/or creating tangible outcomes.

## Citizen Committees

“Citizens committees” involve community members directly in the decision-making process. They are typically formed by local school boards, though the process for selecting committee representatives varies. The size of a citizen’s committee may also fluctuate, but many involve a fair number of participants (anywhere from 30 to 70 members). The citizen’s committee developed in Rock Hill, SC, a suburb of Charlotte, NC, is a good example of a

committee that offered positive leadership around diversity. Growth in Rock Hill made it necessary for the district to review and revise both its elementary and high school student assignment policies in recent years. Learning from a difficult elementary school redistricting process, the district formed a citizen's committee when it became necessary to rezone for a new high school. The 35-person committee spent many months discussing which rezoning guidelines to propose to the school district. In the end, the committee suggested that the district make racial and socioeconomic diversity a priority when building and zoning schools. In general, the local school board may decide against taking the committee's recommendation, but the process surrounding the committee offers the possibility of affirmative and proactive involvement from the community.



success of your community engagement efforts. Developing positive relationships with members of the media is extremely helpful, so that your viewpoint is represented. It may be useful to sketch out op-eds in advance and help supporters craft op-eds and letters to the editor, to ensure that accurate information is conveyed to the community. You might consider assembling a team of community organizers, researchers/scholars, and parents who can respond to uneven and/or inaccurate reporting by submitting opinion articles and/or letters to the editor, participating in radio and/or television interviews, or providing media outlets with more information (research reports, alternative perspectives, promising practices/models, etc.).

## Using the Media to Engage the Public

Many people find out about potential changes in student assignment by reading local newspapers, watching the news, or listening to the radio. Thus, when working to engage your community, monitoring the news about student assignment is vital. The media can play a supportive role in the student assignment planning process by providing important context and data. For instance, the local newspaper in Omaha, NE was credited with helping educators and policymakers build public support for regional school equity measures. On the other hand, news reports about student assignment can potentially stifle healthy and thorough examination of the issues. In these situations, developing a strong communications strategy is essential to the

## Concluding Thoughts

Just as certain types of integration models may be more or less appropriate in different geographical areas, the types of community engagement techniques and tools you use will depend on local context. In areas where court-ordered desegregation was particularly difficult, you may need to take extra steps to create an environment of trust and open communication before a productive conversation about how to move forward can begin. In communities that have supported diversity efforts for decades, it may not be necessary to spend lots

of time trying to build public support. Organizers should not, however, take it for granted that communities will remain committed to integration efforts if there is no consistent effort to keep people aware of its importance. Continued outreach and engagement efforts could focus on how to modernize and/or improve your district's current plan, by discussing promising models and gauging your community's aspirations.

As you engage community members, make sure that they have the information they need to properly analyze the costs and benefits of various student assignment models. During fiscal crises, many school districts face major budget cuts. Spending money on transportation for increased integration may seem like an unnecessary expense. If this is a concern in your community, it is important to clearly and consistently articulate the educational benefits of integration, the need for transportation to carry out your district's plan, and the long-term value of staying committed to equity and diversity. Take steps to ensure that members of the public have an accurate understanding of the costs associated with various student assignment options—student assignment plans that do not attempt to create and/or maintain diversity will not necessarily result in substantial savings for a school district. Determining how much a new student assignment plan will cost, in both the short and long term, is a complex process. Many factors are involved, such as bus route efficiency, mandatory special education transportation expenses in your district, and how a student assignment plan is designed. Be consistent when discussing the financial aspects of student assignment by keeping equity, excellence, diversity, and parental discretion at the center of the conversation.

Sustained efforts to keep communities engaged and informed about integration do pay off. In time, many communities have grown to accept

and support programs and policies that increase diversity. When St. Louis's interdistrict integration program began in 1981 under court order, suburban parents strongly resisted it. In the years since, the diversity created by this voluntary transfer program has come to be a valued aspect of education—white suburban students are some of the program's strongest supporters. In 2004, hundreds of suburban students protested the potential termination of these voluntary integration efforts by walking out of their classes. Educators in communities where integration programs have been sustained over the long-term commonly report similar stories – initial resistance leads first to acceptance, and often to strong support for the programs. As you develop your community engagement plan, keep in mind that students who participate in integration programs often talk about the importance of diversity (and the challenges it poses) in very powerful ways that resonate with strongly held American and moral values. Including these student voices can be a great way to enrich discussions about student assignment in your community.

Organizers and educators involved in integration efforts will tell you that creating more dynamic, functional, and equitable K-12 schools through increased diversity takes time. Diversity is not a quick fix to educational inequities and challenges that have existed for decades, rather it is a commitment to an aspiration that provides a stronger foundation for educational success that has proven potential for systemic transformation over the long-term. Strong community engagement efforts are vital in ensuring that your district's student assignment plan enables students to benefit from increased diversity, both now and into the future.

**Further reading:****Berkeley Unified Student Assignment Plan.**

Available at: <http://www.berkeley.net/index.php?page=student-assignment-plan>

**California Newsreel. *Skin Deep.***

Available at: <http://newsreel.org/nav/title.asp?tc=CN0085>

**California Newsreel. *What's Race Got To Do With It?***

Available at: <http://newsreel.org/video/WHATS-RACE-GOT-TO-DO-WITH-IT> or <http://www.whatsrace.org>

**California Newsreel. *Race: The Power of an Illusion.***

Available at: [http://www.pbs.org/race/000\\_General/000\\_00-Home.htm](http://www.pbs.org/race/000_General/000_00-Home.htm)

**Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Racial and Justice**

(2010 March 27). The Golden Opportunity Summit: Exploring Equity-Minded Approaches to Student Assignment and School Reform.

Available at: <http://charleshamiltonhouston.org/Events/Event.aspx?id=100118>

**Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Racial and Justice.**

Boston Public Schools Receives DOE Technical Assistance Grant for Student Assignment.

Available at: <http://charleshamiltonhouston.org/News/Item.aspx?id=100088>

**Fagotto, Elena and Fung, Archon, "Sustaining Public Engagement: Embedded Deliberation in Local Communities,"**

Everyday Democracy and the Kettering Foundation, 2009. Available at:

<http://www.everyday-democracy.org/en/Resource.136.aspx>

**Kirwan Institute for Race and Ethnicity**

(2009 October). *Final Report: Montclair Public Schools Focus Groups.*

Available at: [http://4909e99d35cada63e7f757471b7243be73e53e14.gripelements.com/publications/montclair\\_focus\\_group\\_report\\_2010\\_0310.pdf](http://4909e99d35cada63e7f757471b7243be73e53e14.gripelements.com/publications/montclair_focus_group_report_2010_0310.pdf)

**Montclair Parent Teacher Association.** *Our Schools, Our Town.* Available at: <http://www.montclairpta.org>

**Montclair Public Schools.** A Historical Perspective of Montclair's Magnet School System.

Available at: <http://www.montclair.k12.nj.us/WebPage.aspx?Id=165>

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**Smith, S. S.** (2010). Still Swimming Against the Resegregation Tide? A Suburban School District in the Aftermath of Parents Involved. *North Carolina Law Review*, 88. Available at: [http://nclawreview.net/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/Smith.wptd\\_.pdf](http://nclawreview.net/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/Smith.wptd_.pdf)

**This Train Productions.** "An Elementary Education."

Trailer available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sCEfOa5SluU>



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***One of the most helpful things to do is to put yourself into the shoes of parents in your community.***

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# APPENDIX

The following organizations might also provide resources to help communities and districts that are seeking to pursue integration.

## LEGAL RESOURCES

### NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF)

[www.naacpldf.org](http://www.naacpldf.org)

NAACP LDF was founded under the leadership of Thurgood Marshall. Although LDF's original purpose was to provide legal assistance to poor African Americans, its work over the years has brought greater justice to all Americans.

### American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Racial Justice Program

[www.aclu.org](http://www.aclu.org)

ACLU advocates for individual rights by litigating, legislating, and educating the public on a broad array of issues affecting individual freedom.

### Anti-Defamation League (ADL)

[www.adl.org](http://www.adl.org)

ADL fights defamation of and discrimination against Jewish people through advocacy and, in some cases, legal action. The organization also fights hatred, extremism, and terrorism by building ties with law enforcement agencies and developing knowledge about terrorist groups.

### Asian American Justice Center

[www.advancingequality.org](http://www.advancingequality.org)

The Asian American Justice Center, formerly the National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium, is a nonpartisan organization that works to advance the human and civil rights of Asian Americans through advocacy, public policy, public education, and litigation.

### Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)

[www.aaldef.org](http://www.aaldef.org)

AALDEF is the first legal rights organization on the East Coast serving Asian Americans, and combines litigation, advocacy, education, and organization in its work with Asian American communities.

### Asian Law Caucus (ALC)

[www.asianlawcaucus.org](http://www.asianlawcaucus.org)

The ALC is a legal and civil rights organization serving low-income Asian Pacific American communities. The Caucus strives to defend and empower Asian Pacific Americans through community education and organizing, direct legal services, and strategic impact litigation.

### CivilRights.org

[www.civilrights.org](http://www.civilrights.org)

CivilRights.org is a collaboration of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights and the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights Educational Fund. Its mission is to serve as the site of record for relevant and recent civil rights news and information.

### Human Rights Law Resource Center (HRLRC)

<http://www.hrlrc.org.au/>

The HRLRC provides support and resources, including interactive news releases, to participating lawyers. The HRLRC maintains an online library of training manuals, briefs, and practice materials.

### Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law

[www.lawyerscomm.org](http://www.lawyerscomm.org)

The Committee's major objective is to use the skills and resources of the bar to obtain equal opportunities for minorities by addressing factors that contribute to racial justice.

### Legal Momentum

[www.legalmomentum.org](http://www.legalmomentum.org)

Legal Momentum aims to advance the rights of women and girls through legal advocacy and community outreach. Legal Momentum's work focuses on immigrant women, violence against women and the prevention of gender discrimination in the courts.

### **Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF)**

[www.maldef.org](http://www.maldef.org)

MALDEF is the leading nonprofit Latino litigation, advocacy, and educational outreach institution in the United States.

### **National Campaign to Restore Civil Rights**

[www.rollbackcampaign.org](http://www.rollbackcampaign.org)

The National Campaign to Restore Civil Rights is a movement devoted to preserving the legal and constitutional gains of the Civil Rights Movement. The Campaign runs outreach programs, including a blog, and disseminates information to a broad network of people and communities.

### **National Housing Law Project (NHLP)**

[www.nhlp.org](http://www.nhlp.org)

NHLP works to preserve and improve the national stock of decent and affordable housing, as well as defend the rights of tenants and homeowners. The Project advocates for public policy change and directs resources and training to attorneys and organizations involved in housing law.

### **National Women's Law Center**

[www.nwlc.org](http://www.nwlc.org)

The National Women's Law Center focuses on litigation, advocacy, and public education regarding gender equality. Its practice areas are education, employment, family economic security, and women's health.

### **Pro Bono Net**

[www.probono.net](http://www.probono.net)

Pro Bono Net is a national organization that provides resources to pro bono and legal aid advocates. Their website serves as a collaboration tool for attorneys. The organization also hosts Law Help ([www.lawhelp.org](http://www.lawhelp.org)), a Web directory of legal services, and an online document assembly ([www.npado.org](http://www.npado.org)) that provides resources with which pro bono or legal aid attorneys and self-represented litigants can assemble and file forms on line.

### **Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund (PRLDEF)**

<http://latinojustice.org/>

PRLDEF works towards an equitable society using legal advocacy and education. It aims to create opportunities for all Latinos to succeed in school and work, fulfill their dreams, and sustain their families and communities.

### **Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)**

[www.splcenter.org](http://www.splcenter.org)

SPLC is internationally known for its legal victories against white supremacy organizations and its tracking of hate groups, as well as the educational resources it provides.

## **EDUCATION RESOURCES**

### **Alliance for Excellent Education**

[www.All4ed.org](http://www.All4ed.org)

The Alliance for Excellent Education works to improve public high school education by assembling and promoting research reports, partnering with relevant institutions, and recommending policy change. The Alliance's work focuses on promoting adolescent literacy, high school teacher quality, small learning communities, and general college preparedness.

### **American Association of School Administrators (AASA)**

[www.aasa.org](http://www.aasa.org)

AASA is a professional organization for public school district superintendents. AASA offers professional development, access to peer networks, and legislative advocacy to members. AASA also hosts the Stand Up for Public Education campaign, which supports outreach programs on the importance of public education.

### **Annenberg/CPB**

[www.learner.org](http://www.learner.org)

Annenberg/CPB uses media and telecommunications in an effort to advance excellent teaching. They provide educational video programs with coordinated Web and print materials for the professional development of K-12 teachers. Annenberg materials are distributed on the organization's digital satellite channel, streamed on demand from the website and distributed for purchase on videocassette and DVD.

### **AntiDefamation League (ADL): Curriculum Connections**

[www.adl.org/education/curriculum\\_connections](http://www.adl.org/education/curriculum_connections)

Curriculum Connections is a collection of lesson plans and other resources that can help educators integrate multicultural, anti-bias, and social justice themes into their curricula. A set of resources, each organized around a particular theme, is distributed by e-mail three to four times a year.

### **Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE)**

<http://crede.berkeley.edu/>

Operated from Berkeley's Graduate College of Education, CREDE is a federally funded research and development program working to assist America's diverse student population in achieving academic excellence. Research focuses on improving the education of students whose ability to learn is challenged by linguistic or cultural barriers, race, geographic location, or poverty.

### **Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS)**

[www.cgcs.org](http://www.cgcs.org)

CGCS is an organization of the nation's 66 largest urban public school districts. The organization's members work on five task forces, which focus on school finance, achievement gaps, bilingual education, district leadership, and professional development. In addition to assembling members, CGCS participates in research and advocacy projects and publishes a newsletter, the Urban Educator.

### **EdChange**

[www.edchange.org](http://www.edchange.org)

EdChange is the organization of a team of teachers and education researchers dedicated to multiculturalism, diversity, and educational equity. EdChange offers online newsletters, documents, and workshops. Its materials focus on educational philosophy and the history of multiculturalism and social justice.

### **The Education Alliance**

[www.lab.brown.edu](http://www.lab.brown.edu)

Hosted by Brown University, the Education Alliance promotes district and school improvement with special attention to underperformance, equity, and diversity. The Alliance partners with schools, districts, and state departments of education to apply research findings towards educational challenges. The organization also designs and delivers expert services around planning, professional development, research, and evaluation.

### **Education Week on the Web**

[www.edweek.org](http://www.edweek.org)

Education Week is a print and on-line publication with articles about education news worldwide, and a searchable on-line index.

### **Eye on Education**

[www.eyoneducation.tv](http://www.eyoneducation.tv)

Hosted by WGBH and the Boston Globe, Eye on Education is an informational website about education reform directed at young readers. The website provides additional resources for high school students in Massachusetts, including a directory of area high schools and MCAS information.

### **Facing History and Ourselves**

[www.facinghistory.org](http://www.facinghistory.org)

Facing History engages teachers and students in an examination of racism, prejudice, and anti-Semitism. Facing History produces classroom materials, offers professional development programs, and pursues research in pedagogical strategies.

### **The Gallery of Teaching and Learning**

<http://gallery.carnegiefoundation.org/>

The Gallery of Teaching and Learning, created by the Knowledge Media Laboratory of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, is a collection of digital records of lesson plans and classroom practices to be shared by teachers nationwide.

### **Justice Learning**

[www.justicelearning.org](http://www.justicelearning.org)

Justice Learning, a collaboration of NPR's Justice Talking and The New York Times Learning Network, is an online collection of teaching materials related to law and policy in the United States. The collection is useful for high school teachers or high school students themselves.

### **Multicultural Review**

[www.mcreview.com](http://www.mcreview.com)

*Multicultural Review* is a quarterly trade journal and book review dedicated to a better understanding of ethnic, racial, and religious diversity. It is intended for educators and librarians at all levels.

### **National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE)**

<http://www.nabe.org/>

NABE is a national professional organization focused on representing bilingual learners and bilingual education professionals. The association advocates for bilingual learners and families to cultivate a multilingual multicultural society.



## **National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME)**

[www.nameorg.org](http://www.nameorg.org)

NAME is a membership organization comprised of individuals interested in multicultural education. Members are educators from preschool to higher education, as well as business and community representatives. NAME publishes a quarterly journal, *Multicultural Perspectives*, and hosts conferences and has local chapters.

## **The National Parent Teacher Association (PTA)**

[www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org)

The National PTA is a membership organization that intends to provide resources and guidance to parents seeking to involve themselves in the education of their children and community. The National PTA consists of members of all local PTAs. The Association offers school and community workshops, runs a parental involvement certification program, hosts a national convention, and publishes a bimonthly magazine, *Our Children*.

## **National School Boards Association (NSBA)**

[www.nsba.org](http://www.nsba.org)

NSBA is a nationwide organization representing public school governing bodies. Its mission is to foster quality and equity in public education through effective school board leadership. It also hosts the Council of School Attorneys and the Council of Urban Boards of Education (CUBE), a membership organization of urban school board members.

## **PBS Teacher Source**

[www.pbs.org/teachersource](http://www.pbs.org/teachersource)

PBS Teacher Source provides lesson plans and activities based on PBS's quality programming and educational services. It also provides resources and advice about child rearing to parents. PBS Teacher Source is a partner organization of Teachers' Domain.

## **Public Education Network (PEN)**

[www.publiceducation.org](http://www.publiceducation.org)

PEN is a membership organization seeking to develop equal and effective public education by helping individuals start or join community advocacy organizations, called local education funds, to improve public education in their area. The Network also increases awareness and discussion of education reform issues through a variety of publications.

## **Rethinking Schools**

[www.rethinkingschools.org](http://www.rethinkingschools.org)

Rethinking Schools publishes educational materials for teachers and students as well as research reports on educational policy. It seeks to use public education to address social inequities.

## **Safe Schools Coalition**

[www.safeschoolscoalition.org](http://www.safeschoolscoalition.org)

With the intention of promoting schools as safe spaces for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender youth and families, the Safe Schools Coalition provides resources and training to school staff, conducts research on education policy and raises awareness on sexual minority youth and parents.

## **Street Law**

[www.streetlaw.com](http://www.streetlaw.com)

Street Law is an organization devoted to providing legal education to high school students across America. Street Law provides seminars for high school teachers and publishes *Street Law: A Course in Practical Law*, a textbook and teaching manual for high school classes. Street Law partnerships, in which law students assist in the teaching of high school classes or legal outreach programs, exist at over 70 law schools in America.

## **Teachers' Domain**

[www.teachersdomain.org](http://www.teachersdomain.org)

Produced by WGBH Boston, Teachers' Domain provides multimedia resources, including copies of public television programs like *Nova* and *American Experience*, for both the classroom and professional development. Teachers' Domain lesson plans conform to national and state standards. Teachers' Domain is a partner organization of PBS Teacher Source.

## **Teaching Tolerance**

[www.teachingtolerance.org](http://www.teachingtolerance.org)

Founded by the Southern Poverty Law Center, Teaching Tolerance provides free classroom materials and educator handbooks for the development curricula about respecting differences and appreciating diversity. Teaching Tolerance's website also includes resources for students and parents.

## **WGBH Teacher Training Tapes**

<http://main.wgbh.org/wgbh/learn/teacher-training.html>

WGBH provides videotapes for training teachers. The tapes review teaching styles in various disciplines as well as individual lesson plans. Tapes can be ordered by mail or phone.

## COMMUNITY RESOURCES

### Center for Social Inclusion

[www.centerforsocialinclusion.org](http://www.centerforsocialinclusion.org)

The Center for Social Inclusion provides support to community organizations by performing applied research, disseminating publications, creating business models, and developing networks. The Center's work focuses on race relations and diversity in various regions. The Center also partners with the Diversity Advancement Project at the Kirwan Institute.

### Chinese for Affirmative Action: Center for Asian American Advocacy (CAA)

[www.caasf.org](http://www.caasf.org)

CAA was founded to protect the civil and political rights of Chinese Americans, particularly those with limited proficiency in English. CAA engages in community and leadership development while focusing advocacy work on issues of racial justice, immigrant rights, and language rights.

### Filipino Advocates for Justice

[www.filipinos4action.org](http://www.filipinos4action.org)

FAA is dedicated to building a strong and empowered Filipino community by organizing constituents, developing leaders, and advocating for policies to the benefit of Filipino Americans.

### League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)

[www.lulac.org](http://www.lulac.org)

LULAC is the oldest membership organization of Hispanic Americans, and executes its goals of community development and the promotion of civil rights through the provision of scholarships and educational services, the development of corporate alliances, and the execution of outreach and advocacy projects.

### National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

[www.naacp.org](http://www.naacp.org)

The NAACP is a membership organization committed to ensuring the political, educational, social, and economic equality of all persons and to eliminating racial hatred and discrimination.

### National Council of La Raza (NCLR)

[www.nclr.org](http://www.nclr.org)

NCLR is the largest national constituency-based Hispanic organization. NCLR assists local organizations with research, advocacy, and capacity-building, aiming to reduce poverty and discrimination and to secure opportunities for all Hispanic Americans.

### National Fair Housing Alliance (NFHA)

[www.nationalfairhousing.org](http://www.nationalfairhousing.org)

NFHA is a national organization dedicated to ending discrimination in housing. The Alliance develops local housing organizations through education and training programs, and also works with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to create national public education campaigns about housing and lending discrimination.

### National Urban League

[www.nul.org](http://www.nul.org)

The Urban League is the nation's oldest and largest community-based movement devoted to the economic and social empowerment of African Americans. The Urban League publishes an annual collection of essays, *The State of Black America*, focusing on racial equality and African American life.

### Poverty and Race Research Action Council (PRRAC)

[www.prrac.org](http://www.prrac.org)

PRRAC is a national organization of major civil rights, civil liberties, and anti-poverty groups. PRRAC connects advocacy with research by sponsoring studies in social science, convening advocates and researchers, and publishing the bimonthly *Poverty & Race* newsletter.

### South Asian American Leaders of Tomorrow (SAALT)

[www.saalt.org](http://www.saalt.org)

SAALT is a national organization dedicated to insuring the full and equal participation of South Asians in the civic and political life of the United States. SAALT seeks to foster engagement in South Asian communities and to increase public education about issues affecting South Asians.

## ACADEMIC RESOURCES

### The Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles (CRP)

[www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu](http://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu)

The CRP, now based at UCLA, is devoted to researching social inequities, particularly in the areas of segregation in K-12 schools, Asian and Latino populations, high-stakes testing and Title I reforms. The CRP collaborates with scholars as well as with advocacy organizations, policymakers, and journalists.

### American Educational Research Association (AERA)

[www.aera.net](http://www.aera.net)

AERA is a professional membership organization of researchers, policymakers, and educators. It promotes and correlates scholarship on education by hosting conferences, distributing fellowships, and creating networks among members. AERA also publishes online news releases and a journal, *The Educational Researcher*.

### American Psychological Association (APA)

[www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org)

APA is the largest association of professional psychologists worldwide. The Association administers an accreditation program, runs a public education campaign and helps members convene and share information. APA also hosts practice groups in law and psychology and educational psychology, among other topics.

### Campaign for Educational Equity, Teachers College, Columbia University

[www.tc.edu/centers/EquityCampaign](http://www.tc.edu/centers/EquityCampaign)

The Campaign executes and disseminates research-based analyses of key education policy issues. The Campaign's research focuses on intervention strategies like early childhood education, children's health and parental involvement. The Campaign's research work is enhanced by partnerships with the Harlem Children's Zone and New York City public schools.

### Center for Multicultural Education, University of Washington

[www.depts.washington.edu/centerme/home.htm](http://www.depts.washington.edu/centerme/home.htm)

The Center for Multicultural Education commands research projects and activities designed to advance educational equity, improve intergroup relations, and promote educational achievement. The Center publishes a handbook on Multicultural Education and also develops strategies for teachers and policymakers.

### The Center for Civil Rights at the University of North Carolina

<http://www.law.unc.edu/centers/civilrights/default.aspx>

The Center for Civil Rights fosters empirical and analytical research, sponsors student inquiry and convenes faculty, visiting scholars, policy advocates and practicing attorneys to confront legal and social issues of greatest concern to racial and ethnic minorities and the poor. The Center's work focuses on many research interests, including housing, community development, and voting rights.

### Center on Democracy in a Multiracial Society, University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign

<http://cdms.illinois.edu/>

The Center on Democracy in a Multiracial Society is devoted to understanding the impact of changing demographics on the practice of democracy. Research areas include everyday life and popular culture, public education, and the effects of changing media and technology on democracy.

### Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice, Harvard University

[www.charleshamiltonhouston.org/Home.aspx](http://www.charleshamiltonhouston.org/Home.aspx)

The Charles Hamilton Houston Institute is a legal research organization devoted to honoring the legacy of civil rights lawyer and educator Charles Hamilton Houston. The legal research of the Institute is focused on a variety of areas, including the school-to-prison pipeline, the crises faced by prisoners upon re-entry, and racial disparities in both education and capital sentencing.

### Chief Justice Earl Warren Institute on Race, Ethnicity and Diversity, University of California at Berkeley

[www.law.berkeley.edu/centers/ewi/](http://www.law.berkeley.edu/centers/ewi/)

The Chief Justice Earl Warren Institute represents the intersection of a variety of subject areas in the study of race and diversity. It promotes multidisciplinary research, publishes policy recommendations, and supports curricular innovation. The Institute focuses on many research areas, including integration in K-12 education, immigration policy, and voting rights.

### The Institute on Race and Poverty at the University of Minnesota

[www.irpumn.org/website/](http://www.irpumn.org/website/)

The Institute on Race and Poverty is devoted to researching the effects of changing policies on people of color and the poor. The Institute collaborates with research and advocacy organizations to promote equality. The Institute focuses on many issues, including housing and education segregation, urban development, and suburbanization.

### **Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, Ohio State University**

[www.kirwaninstitute.org](http://www.kirwaninstitute.org)

The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity is a multidisciplinary research organization that investigates potential causes of and solutions to racial and ethnic inequalities. The Institute hosts the Diversity Advancement Project, which promotes diversity in public and private institutions, and the African American Male project. The Institute also publishes *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts*.

### **National Academy of Education (NAEd)**

[www.naeducation.org](http://www.naeducation.org)

NAEd is a selective membership organization comprised of scholars of educational policies and methods. In addition to serving on committees and study panels, Academy members are also deeply engaged in NAEd's professional development programs, which aim to prepare of the next generation of scholars of education. NAEd also sponsors fellowship programs.

### **Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL)**

<http://www.cal.org/crede/>

CAL is dedicated to providing a comprehensive range of research-based information tools, and resources related to language and culture. The Center also provides technical assistance, professional development, curriculum development and program evaluation to help all students particularly English Language Learners succeed.



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***As suburban demographics evolve, policy can either harness the social potential presented by diverse communities and schools, or it can exacerbate and harden divisions and inequities.***

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# MAGNET SCHOOLS

## Primer on Magnet Schools

- Magnet schools are the largest set of choice-based schools in the nation.
- Many have special themes or curricular offerings to help attract a diverse community of students.
- Magnet schools were originally designed to incorporate strong civil rights protections (such as good parent information/outreach, explicit desegregation goals, and free transportation). Most were also created without selective admissions processes.

*(Many magnet schools have evolved over the years and have lost some of these original structures.)*

- Research suggests that magnet schools help promote positive academic outcomes for students.

*In an era of exploding educational choice options – rapidly accelerated by the popularity of charter schools – and with growing racial diversity, how can magnet schools provide a tool for combining diversity and choice?*

## Some key differences between magnet and charter schools

- Magnet schools were located in 31 states in 2005-06, the latest year for which there is available data, and enroll more students (just over 2 million) than charter schools.
- Charter schools also contain a higher percentage of white students than magnet schools, while there is higher segregation of black students—and isolation of white students—in charter schools than magnet schools.

*In short, in comparison to magnet schools, many charter schools today are enrolling a disproportionately white student population. These data suggest that it is important to consider the experiences of magnet schools alongside those of charter schools as educational choice grows.*

## How are magnet schools changing?

The mission of magnet schools has shifted considerably from its historical focus on racial desegregation. Today, in the aftermath of federal court decisions limiting race-conscious efforts by school districts, magnets comprise a diverse set of schools serving a variety of functions. Federal evaluations,<sup>1</sup> along with a recent survey of magnet schools, support these statements.

- The first federal report found that over 60% of magnets studied were “fully desegregated,” with the remainder still reporting substantial racial/ethnic diversity.
- The next evaluation found less encouraging results: only 42% of new magnet programs were operating under obvious desegregation guidelines.
- Finally, the latest federal magnet study found that 57% of newly founded magnet programs were making progress in combating racial isolation, while another 43% were experiencing an increase in segregation.

*(This study did not research desegregation goals, suggesting that priorities – at least at the federal level – may have been shifting as later magnet schools were established.)*

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on federal magnet evaluations, see Blank et al., 1983 Steele & Eaton, 1996 and Christenson et. al, 2003

CRP's 2008 magnet schools survey found that only one-third of schools in the sample still had desegregation goals. Nearly as many schools no longer or never had desegregation goals. The conditions under which magnet schools are structured have important implications for levels of diversity.

Some of these conditions include:

**Desegregation goals** – Schools with desegregation goals are more likely to be substantially integrated or experiencing increasing integration.

**Type of Magnet Program** – Whole school magnets as compared to school-within-a-school magnets were more likely to be diverse.

**Type of admissions process** – Competitive admissions criteria, such as using GPA or test scores as part of the admissions process, were used more often by a larger number of segregated schools.

**Outreach** – Magnet schools that outreach to prospective students are more likely to have experienced increasing integration over the last decade, while one-quarter of those without special outreach were one-race schools.

**Transportation** – Transportation has been an important provision of magnet schools, specifically to ensure that everyone who chooses what might be out-of-neighborhood schools is able to attend. Magnet programs that offer free transportation appear less likely to be racially isolated since they provide a concrete means for a broad community of students to access the school.

## How can we promote and preserve the integrative mission of magnet schools, and extend those policies to other schools?

Policymakers:

1. Renewed commitment to creating magnet schools with guidelines for racial diversity that fall within the bounds of the recent Supreme Court decision.
2. As the growth of charter schools continues, federal and state charter school legislation should contain some recognition and enforcement of equity provisions from magnet school history.

District and school personnel, along with community stakeholders:

3. Continued funding for districts to provide free transportation to magnet school students, even in the face of rising fuel costs. Districts should think about geocoding, consolidating bus routes, or using public transit (where available) as strategies to offset costs.
4. Support for magnet programs that emphasize non-competitive admissions policies like open enrollment (with broad outreach) and lottery systems. If competitive admissions policies are used, interviews and essays can help counter the segregating effects associated with the consideration of test scores, GPAs, and audition performances. Competitive magnets should also add race, geography (e.g., neighborhood residence), and/or socioeconomic status as one or more admissions factors.
5. Continued and increased use of special outreach to attract students from a variety of backgrounds.
6. An increased emphasis on teacher training for racially diverse learning environments.

# REDISTRICTING

## School Zoning and Diversity: A Primer

Many school districts in the U.S. assign students to schools based on where they live within the district, resulting in what are often called 'neighborhood' or 'community' schools. However, communities with racially segregated housing patterns that assign students to schools based solely on geographic proximity often produce racially isolated schools. For example, many districts that have adopted neighborhood based plans that eliminated any use of race have found a rise in racial isolation because many communities still have segregated neighborhoods. Decisions about where to assign students and how best to adjust attendance boundaries are often politically charged, and encouraging racial diversity is often one of several important goals that school officials keep in mind as they balance various interests. Today, districts around the country are making school siting or closing decisions and many are considering district consolidation and redistricting, particularly as the suburban population continues to expand. As a result, it is important that each of these decisions is made with effective strategies in mind to increase and/or maintain racial diversity and prevent unintentional resegregation.

## What is the current legal landscape of voluntary school integration?

*Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District and Meredith v. Jefferson County Board of Education* challenged the voluntary integration plans in Seattle, Washington and Louisville, Kentucky; however, there are important facts to consider:

- While the Court placed limits on the ability of school districts to take race into account, it did not rule out all consideration of race in student assignment.
- A majority of Supreme Court justices held that promoting diversity and avoiding racial isolation in schools are compelling national interests that school districts can and should pursue.
- School districts have broad latitude to consider factors other than race, such as socioeconomic status, whether a student lives in a particular neighborhood, or parental education level in assigning students to school. Furthermore, Justice Kennedy explicitly recognized that school districts have a compelling interest in promoting diversity and avoiding racial isolation in schools.

## Segregation on the Rise: Why is it important to consider racial diversity when redistricting?

- The U.S. has been experiencing a period of steady increase in segregation since the late 1980s at national, regional, and district levels, reversing much of the early success that led to several decades of desegregated schooling.
- Approximately 2.4 million students—including one in six of both Black and Latino students-- attend hypersegregated schools in which the student population is 99-100% students of color.
- Whites are the most isolated group of students in the U.S., with the typical White public school student attending a school that is more than three-quarters White. What are some of the benefits of integrated schools?

**Black and Latino students who attend integrated schools have higher academic achievement than those students who attend schools with predominately Black and Latino students.**

- Higher student aspirations resulting from integrated schools have been linked to higher expectations of students within integrated schools.



- Once children from desegregated environments reach adulthood, they tend to live and work in more integrated settings.
- Students who attend diverse schools have higher comfort levels with members of racial/ethnic groups different from their own, an increased sense of civic engagement, and a greater desire to live and work in multiracial settings.
- Employers benefit when the future workforce has been educated in integrated schools and are experienced in working across racial lines.

## What are some common redistricting methods to promote integration?

Methods that were explicitly recognized by Justice Kennedy as permissible race-conscious approaches to voluntary integration:

- Drawing and Adjustment of School Attendance Boundaries--Each time school districts assign student assignment zones, there is an opportunity to consider student demographics to ensure racially integrated student populations.
- Siting of new schools--school districts can attempt to place new schools in locations that are likely to create racially diverse schools.

While not explicitly endorsed by Justice Kennedy, these methods are similar to the approaches above, as they do not take race into account for individual students:

- School Pairing/Grade Realignment--Two adjacent schools that have different racial compositions of students can be merged and their attendance areas redrawn in order to ensure racially integrated student populations.
- Multi-District Consolidation--Regions encompassing several different school systems can consolidate their school districts to create a single district to promote racially diverse student populations.

Methods that generally take individual student characteristics into account<sup>1</sup>:

- Student Transfers--Schools can establish voluntary student transfer programs designed to promote integration and/or reduce racial isolation.
- Inter-District Transfer Program--School districts can team up with neighboring districts to achieve voluntary integration through inter-district transfer programs.

As districts attempt to adopt methods that promote racial diversity in schools, there will likely be those who are strongly opposed to the idea. The recent fervor, for example, in Wake County, NC and Charlotte, NC against student assignment plans focused on achieving racial diversity has resulted in divided communities. In contrast, with effective leadership, an informed citizenry, and a strategic plan to create racially balanced schools, Rock Hill, SC and Louisville, KY have been successful in designing plans that promote racially balanced schools. These districts demonstrate that even with the Supreme Court decision in *Parents Involved* (2007), school districts have latitude in designing and implementing effective strategies that promote racial diversity, providing both academic and social benefits to its students and society.

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<sup>1</sup> An individual student's race should not be the sole factor considered in whether a transfer is granted or a student is accepted into a special program. Instead, if and when an individual student's race is considered, it should be—at minimum—as one of many components in a “nuanced, individual evaluation of school needs and student characteristics,” as Justice Kennedy explained.

## SOCIAL SCIENCE FINDINGS ABOUT SCHOOL INTEGRATION

**Racially integrated student bodies are essential for K-12 schools to further their mission to prepare children to be global citizens in our increasingly diverse society.**

- School districts that adopt voluntary integration plans seek to obtain the numerous benefits of racially integrated schools and avoid the harms associated with racial isolation—all of which further the vital role of schools in our society.
- Race-conscious plans that seek to maintain racially integrated schools benefit all students and do not disadvantage any group because all students would be guaranteed admission to a school. In contrast to institutions of higher education, admission to most K-12 schools is not based on any particular kind of merit.
- Americans of all races and ethnicities substantially support the idea of racially integrated schools. Public opinion polls show widespread support for the ideal of integration. The majority of parents whose children have attended integrated schools believe that integrated schools have improved the quality of their child's education. Teachers also believe that integrated classrooms provide unique educational benefits that cannot be attained in single-race classrooms.
- Students in racially diverse schools are less likely to develop racial stereotypes or prejudice than students who are not in daily contact with people of other races. Well-established techniques for structuring racially diverse schools have proven to improve the academic and social outcomes for all students in desegregated settings.
- Metro areas with completely integrated schools have experienced declining residential segregation.

**Racially integrated schools promote social cohesion and reduce prejudice.**

- Racially integrated schools promote cross-racial understanding in ways that are not possible in segregated school environments. Students in racially integrated schools are also more likely to have friendships with individuals from other races and are more willing to live and work in integrated settings than those in segregated schools.

**Racially integrated schools enhance students' learning, expand their future opportunities, and benefit society at large.**

- Research suggests that the critical thinking skills of all students improve in racially integrated classrooms. Diverse learning opportunities make all students better problem solvers and communicators.
- The academic achievement of black and Latino students is generally higher in desegregated schools compared with black and Latino students in segregated minority schools.
- Integrated school environments do not harm the test scores of white students. In fact, white students who grow up in racially segregated neighborhoods are likely to benefit from integrated school environments as they gain the opportunity to understand and value multiple perspectives and emerge from school better prepared for living and working in our increasingly diverse American society.
- Minority students who attend integrated schools are connected to higher-status social networks, which improve their chances of attending more selective colleges and getting higher-status jobs.
- Because students who are products of integrated schools tend to enjoy higher rates of high school graduation and college attendance, racially diverse schools lead to a more educated workforce.

As the Supreme Court recognized in *Brown v. Board of Education*, racially segregated minority schools are unequal. The racial segregation of students in schools is increasing and the stakes for our society to provide an equal education to all children are higher than ever in light of the demographic changes in our society.

- Historically, the vast majority of segregated minority schools have been plagued by a lack of resources that are essential to a learning environment. Segregated minority schools generally have fewer qualified and experienced teachers, higher teacher turnover rates, larger class size, fewer advanced classes, inferior infrastructure, and fewer basic educational supplies.
- Racially integrated schools provide exposure to middle-class, college-going peer groups that minority students may not otherwise obtain in schools of concentrated poverty. For non-native English speakers, integrated schools can also provide important exposure to native English speakers.
- Very few high-poverty, segregated minority high schools have graduation rates of more than half the students they enroll in the ninth grade. Of those students who do graduate, few are prepared for college, diminishing their future opportunities and contributions to society.

Years of experience and social science research show that schools cannot achieve racial integration without making it an explicit goal through policies that consider race. School districts that have not been able to implement race-conscious policies have not achieved the racial integration necessary to obtain the short-term and long-term benefits of integrated education.

- Colorblind approaches generally work to the disadvantage of minority groups. Because we live in a society with deep residential segregation, choice plans that are not racially conscious have not produced the same racial diversity as plans that consider a child's race. Choice plans that do not have a racial component assume that everyone is equally able to choose any option, and do not consider the constraints, including lack of information, that limit the choices made by those without access to high-quality networks.
- The experience in districts that have abandoned their race-conscious desegregation plans has shown that race-neutral student assignment plans often result in racial resegregation, and in some districts, declining achievement for minority students.
- Although in most circumstances it would not produce nearly as high a level of desegregation as existing racial desegregation plans, socioeconomic integration is educationally valuable in its own right and may offer some opportunities for integrated education. In defining social and economic desegregation policies, primary emphasis should not be on individual free lunch status—special attention should be given to areas of concentrated poverty, areas with concentrations of low-achieving students, areas where linguistic minorities are segregated, and geographic diversity.

## STATE OF SEGREGATION

**Public school enrollment has undergone a dramatic transformation since the Civil Rights Era and is multiracial.**

- Latino students are now the largest group of minority students in the public schools (19%); Latino students comprise over a third of students in the West (36%).
- Black students are 17% of all public school students and are more than a quarter of students in the South.
- The West now has a minority of white students (47%) and the South soon will (50%).

**Students in the largest three racial groups typically attend schools in which less than half the students are from other races than themselves.**

- White students are more isolated than students from any other racial/ethnic background. They go to schools, on average, where only one out of five students are from different racial groups. This gives white students very little opportunity to reap the benefits of integrated schools.
- Asian students are the most integrated group of students, although some subgroups of Asian students experience high levels of segregation.

**Black students in the South for decades were more integrated than black students in any region of the country, although segregation levels for black students in the South have been rising rapidly since the late 1980s.**

**High—and growing—percentages of black and Latino students attend schools with high percentages of minority students.**

- Nearly three-quarters of black & Latino students (73% and 77%, respectively) attend predominantly minority schools, or schools where more than half of students are nonwhite.
- Almost 40% of black and Latino students (38% and 39%, respectively) attended racially isolated minority schools in which less than ten percent of students are white. Research shows that such schools are also very likely to be schools where more than half of students come from low-income families and have difficulty retaining highly qualified teachers.
- The percentage of black and Latino students attending both types of segregated schools has increased in the last fifteen years. Segregation levels are highest in the Northeast.

**Why should we care about segregated schools? A great deal of social science evidence regarding the benefits of integrated schools and the harms of segregated schools is summarized in an amicus brief filed with the Supreme Court in October 2006; see “*Brief of 553 American Social Scientists*” at [www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/deseg/amicus\\_parents\\_v\\_seattle.pdf](http://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/deseg/amicus_parents_v_seattle.pdf).**

For further information, please visit The Civil Rights Project website at <http://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/>. Statistics taken from “Racial Transformation and the Changing Nature of Segregation” by Gary Orfield and Chungmei Lee. Data analyzed is from the U.S. Department of Education’s Common Core of Data, 2003-04.

# TRANSPORTATION

## What is the role of free transportation in public schooling?

- Safe, reliable transportation to and from school is a basic need for students and families throughout the country. School districts provide transportation to students every day for a variety of reasons, most commonly related to geographic distance from school.
- State-provided transportation was initially used as an explicit part of desegregation efforts following the Civil Rights Act. Although in southern states, transportation often helped maintain school segregation prior to Brown.

*(The first formal discussion of free transportation was written into the 1965 federal desegregation guidelines outlining how districts should comply with the Civil Rights Act of 1964.)*

*(Two subsequent Supreme Court cases about districts' desegregation obligations noted the importance of transportation to help create desegregated schools, particularly in communities with segregated neighborhoods.)*

- Given the strong link between residential segregation and neighborhood schools, access to free transportation historically has been—and still remains—a fundamental component of desegregation efforts.

## Why is transportation important in implementing school choice?

- With the growth of efforts to allow families more school choices, transportation remains a critical component of allowing all students access to schools outside of their neighborhood—to allow students the same access to schools regardless of where they live.
- Transportation is particularly critical for the success of magnet schools, which are designed to attract students from across a district. At the same time, this very design makes magnet school transportation more costly. Yet, research finds that the provision of free transportation is particularly important for minority parents' consideration of magnet schools for their children, and magnets without transportation are more likely to be racially isolated.
- Studies of charter schools, another popular school choice option, reveal that students attending charter schools may travel further than students attending traditional public schools; however, charter schools often lack transportation requirements.

## What are the current challenges with transportation?

- In an era of rising transportation costs and declining budgets, transportation has been one of the areas where school districts have made cuts. Yet, these cuts may limit access to out of neighborhood schools—which limits students' choices and may impede diversity efforts.
- Many states now allow for transferring to other districts through open enrollment policies, but few offer transportation even for children from low-income families. By contrast, interdistrict choice programs with an explicit desegregation focus all provide transportation to every student.

*(Further, providing reimbursement for transportation costs is less effective at serving disadvantaged students because of the burden placed on these families to pay for transportation up-front and understand what is required for reimbursement.)*

## Why should we care?

A growing body of evidence shows that there are important academic and social outcomes for students and their communities where there are diverse schools. Given persistently high levels of housing segregation, transportation is a critical tool to helping districts create integrated schools—and realize other system goals regarding student outcomes.

## For More Information:

The Civil Rights Project/*Proyecto Derechos Civiles*  
University of California, Los Angeles  
8370 Math Sciences, Box 951521  
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1521  
310-267-5562  
crp@ucla.edu  
[www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu](http://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu)

# The Civil Rights Project



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