The BENEFITS OF RACIAL AND ECONOMIC INTEGRATION IN OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM: WHY THIS MATTERS FOR OUR DEMOCRACY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2007, in *Parents Involved*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that school districts could not classify students solely on the basis of race when voluntarily pursuing integration. Since then, many school districts have been scrambling to replace their race-based assignment plans with race-neutral ones. To some this signals the end of *Brown* and the abandonment of racially integrated schools. Yet, a majority of the Justices agreed that the state has a compelling interest in both promoting diversity and avoiding racial isolation in our public schools. Given the increasingly deep and pervasive race and class-based segregation in our nation, what can be done to end this isolation and increase opportunities in our schools and in our communities?

The remedies and educational initiatives we have enacted thus far have only demonstrated modest amounts of success in part because they are failing to disrupt the cycle of racialized poverty that is creating and reinforcing pervasive educational inequities. In this report, we demonstrate the benefits of an approach that proactively pursues racial and economic integration in our schools. Setting integration both as a goal and as a solution, requires targeting policies and practices embedded in educational opportunity structures such as school locations, student assignment plans, and the quality and diversity of instructors.

Our first task is to review the negative effects of both socioeconomic and racial segregation.[1] Research consistently shows that living in concentrated poverty decreases life opportunities. It limits educational attainment, constrains future earning potential, and negatively impacts health and safety. This can trap individuals, families, and entire communities in an inescapable, generational cycle of poverty. Schools' socioeconomic makeup has an even greater impact on student performance than does that student family's socioeconomic or racial status. In other words, the race and socioeconomic status (SES) of the school matter more than the race and SES of the student.

Some assert that SES can or must be used to achieve racial integration, but many school districts that have adopted this approach have seen their schools become increasingly segregated and their student achievement levels drop. We caution against such a binary approach; research demonstrates that there are unique advantages to both racial and economic integration. Thus student assignment plans must be deliberately created to serve all students of varying racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds. This process is complex. Plans must be customized for each district taking into account local particularities and factors such as: race, place, class, socioeconomic status, academic performance, and language barriers.

Our second task is to show the positive effects of economically and racially integrated schools. Research has consistently demonstrated that these schools prepare all students,

not just the impoverished students of color, to be effective citizens in our pluralistic society, enhance social cohesion, and reinforce democratic values. Students in integrated schools benefit from a higher level of parental involvement, graduate at higher rates, complete more years of education, earn higher degrees and major in more varied disciplines, gain greater access to professional jobs, and earn higher incomes, even when controlling for a number of other background characteristics. A growing number of studies also show that institutions such as schools, when properly integrated, help stabilize diverse communities.

It is important to note at the outset that simple desegregation efforts often fail to achieve "true" integration, resulting in assimilation, segregation within schools, ability grouping and tracking. Conversely, meaningful integration transforms the educational setting, fostering open relationships and the exchange of ideas among students of all races, ethnicities, and classes. Through policy, space, curriculum, trained instructors, supportive administrators, counselors and other student advocates, integrated schools and neighborhoods contribute to the construction of an equitable, multi-racial democracy.

Moving Forward:

- In order to promote high achievement for all, fulfill our democratic responsibility, and provide students with the cultural fluency necessary to participate in our pluralistic society, we must make a long-term commitment to end racial and socioeconomic isolation in our schools. This has implications for both student assignment plans and in-school educational practices such as tracking or ability grouping.

- Although many districts are reaching for overly simplistic remedies that can be seamlessly crafted in light of *Parents Involved*, each school district must take geographic and demographic particularities into account when crafting a custom integration plan. Research supports the utilization of a multi-factor approach that deliberately seeks to uphold racial integration, including such factors as location of neighborhoods of spatially concentrated poverty and neighborhoods of low educational opportunity, family SES, and student academic achievement levels.

- Although the *Parents Involved* decision limits the means districts have available to achieve racial integration, it lays promising legal groundwork for addressing racial isolation across and within opportunity structures, including housing, public health, economic development and transportation. Research supports the need to work within and across each domain to achieve equity in education by closing the achievement gap and raising the performance level of all students.

- Parents, community organizations, researchers, and others must collectively advocate for integrated education. Policy makers must ensure integration policies and practices are implemented and aligned in the ways necessary to fully harness the benefits of diversity, and to achieve high-quality, comprehensive, and effective education.

- In pursuing any educational change, we must be careful not to undermine the very purpose of the public system of education- to give our students the knowledge and skills necessary to become full members of our democratic society, and to strengthen and legitimize our democracy.
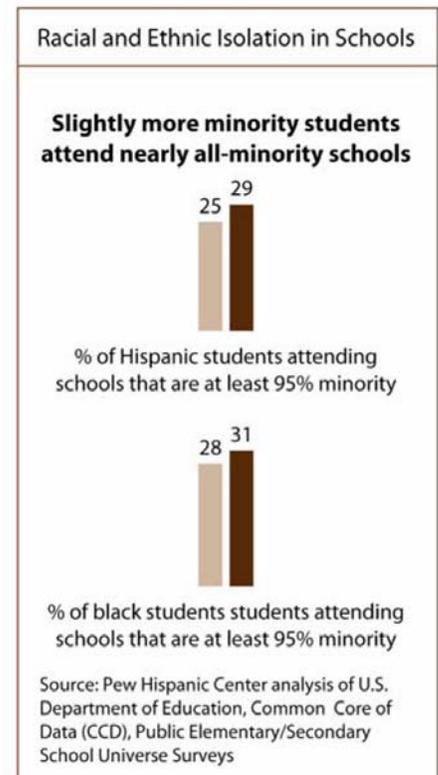
INTRODUCTION

We know from decades of scholarship that racially and economically integrated education can promote individual lifelong success, stabilize communities, and secure the economic viability of the nation. Unfortunately, deep and pervasive race and class-based segregation is undermining these benefits that can accrue from an integrated education, and is compromising the very nature of our democracy.

Public education has been under scrutiny in recent decades, and educators, researchers and policy-makers have continued to work in tandem to address the nuances of student performance and the persistent achievement gap. As a substantial body of research can attest, there are a number of factors that contribute to academic performance, from conditions within the family and community, to school characteristics such as class size, teacher quality and fiscal resources. An increasing number of researchers, however, are identifying segregation – namely racial and class isolation – as a convergence point for factors that contribute to decreased academic performance.

The number of nearly all-minority schools (defined as a school where fewer than 5% of the students are white) doubled between 1993-2006.[2] Not surprisingly, whites are the least likely to attend high-minority schools,[3] and despite comprising approximately 56% of the school age population, on average they attended schools where 76.6% of the population was white.[4] Black and Hispanic students remain the most segregated from white students. In 2005-2006, 56% of Hispanic students attended a school in which at least half of the student population was Hispanic, and nearly 50% of black students attended a majority black school.[5] Two thirds of these schools are in areas of concentrated poverty with very high levels of segregation.[6]

These high levels of racial isolation in schools are a reflection of the racial isolation in our neighborhoods. Residential segregation is highest for African American populations than for all other racial or ethnic groups, regardless of income.[7] Further, low-income African American and Latino populations are more likely to be highly segregated in high-poverty neighborhoods. Three out of four residents in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty are black or Latino, and blacks in metropolitan areas in 2000 had a 1 in 10 chance of living in concentrated poverty, compared to a 1 out of 100 chance for whites.[8]

Racial and Ethnic Isolation in Schools

Slightly more minority students attend nearly all-minority schools

25   29

% of Hispanic students attending schools that are at least 95% minority

28   31

% of black students students attending schools that are at least 95% minority

Source: Pew Hispanic Center analysis of U.S. Department of Education, Common Core of Data (CCD), Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Surveys

Graph originally published by: Richard Fry, 2007.

All too often, segregation in housing and education is attributed to personal choice, and as a result, many consider the issue to be intractable. Segregation was (and is) spatially inscribed through policies such as exclusionary zoning and redlining however, and

schools were further disadvantaged by the drawing of district boundaries along racial lines, and the creation of funding formulas that deplete high-poverty schools of resources. As this cumulative disadvantage was (and is) conferred through polices, responsive policy interventions are needed to affirmatively connect people of color to opportunity. Historic efforts to address segregation have led many into an era of "desegregation

exhaustion." It might be easier to believe that *Brown* remedied state sponsored racism, ushering us into a post-racial period. The most recent Supreme Court ruling on desegregation, *Parents Involved*,[9] appears to support this position. In that case, a majority of the Court ruled that school districts trying to achieve diversity could not classify students solely on the basis of race. Unknown to many, five justices, including Justice Kennedy, agreed that a compelling government interest in avoiding racial isolation also exists, allowing school districts to take race into account if they avoid classifying students as they do so. The ruling left school districts with voluntary desegregation plans scrambling to reevaluate their constitutionality.

Some districts have replaced, or are in the process of replacing, race-based student assignment policies with race-neutral ones, seeking to identify other factors that could create integrated environments such as socioeconomic status, academic achievement, academic performance, language, and parental education level.[10] Yet socioeconomic and racial segregation persists, and is actually increasing in districts where desegregation court orders have been lifted, or student assignment plans have been dismantled.

The isolation of impoverished students of color contributes to an achievement gap. Given the inequitable distribution of resources and the lack of opportunity experienced by people of color, the term 'achievement gap' can more aptly be understood as an opportunity gap.[11] Those school districts which are more economically stable generally have more resources to hire better-trained teachers, have parents with higher levels of education and income, have fewer students of color, and produce better test score and graduation rates than racially isolated and impoverished school districts. If we want to remedy this achievement gap, increase life opportunities, and foster democracy building skills among our youth, it is important for us to step back and review the harms of segregation, and the benefits of integration. As an increasingly multi-racial nation, we cannot risk ignoring these essential pursuits. To clarify the task at hand, we first examine the relationship between concentrated poverty, socioeconomic status, race and opportunity.

CONCENTRATED POVERTY, SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS AND RACE

### The Negative Effects of Concentrated Poverty

Research consistently shows that living in concentrated poverty decreases life opportunities, even when controlling for family characteristics. Highly segregated, low-

income neighborhoods limit educational attainment, constrain future earning potential, and negatively impact health and safety. This can trap individuals, families and entire communities in an inescapable, generational cycle of poverty.[12]

A recent study details the deleterious effects of living in concentrated poverty, one of which is the decrease in children's verbal test scores by about four IQ points, equivalent to missing approximately one year of school. This cumulative disadvantage persists even after children move to non-disadvantaged neighborhoods.[13] A similar study at the University of California, Berkeley found that high-poverty neighborhoods not only impact student performance, but also produce observable biological and neurological effects. The prefrontal cortex (the part of the brain responsible for problem solving, reasoning and creativity) responds more slowly in low-income children, comparable to a person who has suffered a stroke. Researchers postulate that this is likely due to lower levels of stimulation and increased levels of stress.[14]

Researchers have also found that the socioeconomic composition of schools has a greater impact on student performance than the family's socioeconomic or racial status.[15] One researcher argues that the "single most powerful predictor of a good education [is] the presence of a core of middle class families who will insist upon, and get, a quality school for their children."[16] Consistent with this, the Century Foundation found that on average, low-income students attending a middle class school perform better than middle class students attending a low-income school.[17] Further, a study found that students in one middle class school were twenty-two times more likely to be consistently high performing than in a high-poverty school.[18] This is due in part to the multitude of positive educational factors, often secured by insistent middle class families, that correlate with middle-class schools: lower student turnover, a well trained, stable teaching force, better resources, and smaller class sizes, to name a few.

Figure 2. Student's NAEP Math Scores, by Type of School, 2007
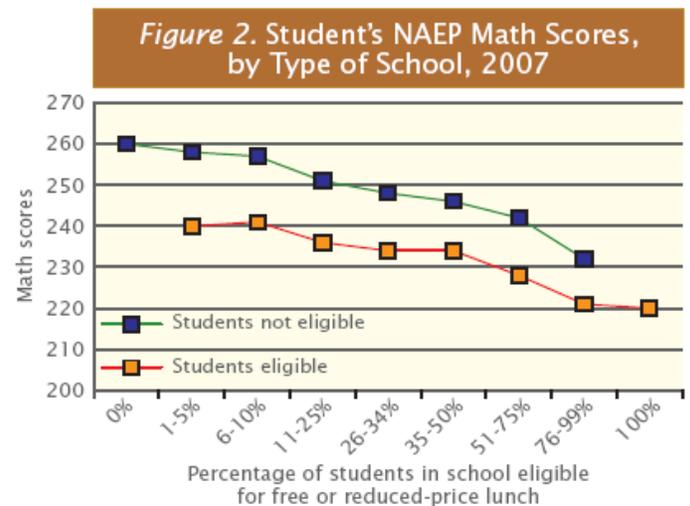
Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessments of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2007 Math Assessment, Grade 4.

Graph originally published by: The Century Foundation. 2007.

The Correlation Between Socioeconomic Status and Race

Many ask about the relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and race when

addressing the forces behind and negative effects of segregation. It is incontrovertible that race and class are highly correlated in the United States.[19] In 2006, 9.3% of the non-Hispanic white population lived in poverty (17.9 million), compared to 25.3% of the black population (9 million blacks).[20] This relationship leads some

researchers to suggest that SES integration can take the place of race integration.[21] Some school districts act on this belief when fashioning student assignment plans, perhaps in response to the *Parent Involved* decision. They assume that SES plans will be successful in maintaining racial diversity, because of its correlation to race. This assumption is flawed. Researchers have found that income integration is no guarantee of even modest racial desegregation.[22] Consider the Denver, San Francisco, and Charlotte-Mecklenburg school systems. As each ended racial integration plans, their schools became increasingly segregated and student achievement levels dropped, even when factors assumed to achieve racial diversity were used in student assignment.[23]

Denver School District ended the use of race in making student assignment decisions in 1995. Within a year, the percentage of racially isolated black schools rose 11%. The number of racially isolated white schools actually increased. By 2003, schools with less than 30% white students enrolled 84% of Latinos and 74% of blacks. In schools that became more minority concentrated, achievement of both Latino and black students declined, with a more pronounced drop for Latino students.[24]

San Francisco school authorities entered into a consent decree in 1999 that substituted the use of race with an index that considered non-racial factors in student assignment decisions. These factors include socioeconomic status, academic achievement, English-language learner status, mother's educational background, academic performance at prior school, home language, and geographic areas. Data shows that the new race-neutral plan was not only unable to maintain racial integration, it also accelerated racial resegregation, particularly in elementary schools. These shifts occurred even though the new race-neutral index indicated that the schools were "highly diverse," impacting the elementary schools the most. At the same time, the number of schools scoring at the lowest level on the state's Academic Performance Index increased.[25]

Finally, research from the Charlotte-Mecklenburg system shows that after the district was declared unitary in 2002, its implementation of a race-neutral, neighborhood-based student assignment plan led to a substantial increase in school segregation within the district, accompanied by declines in academic achievement among students attending racially and SES-isolated schools.[26]

These outcomes reflect several weaknesses behind using class in place of race when fashioning student assignment plans. First, economic integration plans do not consider patterns of housing discrimination and white resistance to living in neighborhoods of color. Studies of housing patterns across the United States suggest that black residential segregation remains high across all socioeconomic levels.[27] For example, one study of the Boston area showed that a black family making $60,000/year was more likely to live

in a neighborhood with higher poverty and lower educational attainment than a white family making $30,000/year.[28] This shows that racial residential segregation has more of an impact than income residential segregation.[29] On broader scale, one recent examination of 89 of the 100 largest school districts suggested that SES integration, based on the percent of students receiving free and reduced lunch, would not produce substantial racial integration in those areas.[30] Student assignment plans that use poverty tend to exclude remedies for minority middle-class students, who are often isolated in inferior schools and behind in achievement.[31] Sending black or Latino families, many of whom have just achieved lower middle class status, back to racially isolated schools with many poor minority students would be counterproductive at the very least.

In addition, socioeconomic status is narrowly based on whether students are on free and reduced lunch (those who fall at or below 185% of the poverty level). Although it's a start, this statistic tells us little about the other factors that are known to correlate with student academic achievement. For example, one student on free and reduced lunch may have two parents who are college graduates, and full access to health, vision and dental services from prenatal onward as well as to early childhood education, all of which contribute to higher performance. Another student may fall well below the poverty line, and may not have been exposed to any of these mitigating factors. On paper, these students may look identical, but the amount of resources needed to educate the latter child may be vastly disproportionate. In some school districts, if a parent loses a job, he or she would be reclassified based on his eligibility for free and reduced lunch and reassigned to a school accordingly, only to have the parent regain a job a few weeks later. Although socioeconomic status does have a profound impact on a student's academic achievement, it is not descriptive enough to serve as the sole basis of student assignment policies.

This is not to say that class-based policies are ineffective. Certainly integrating a student body economically has particular advantages and should be a central part of any student assignment policy, however it alone cannot confer the multitude of benefits that a more robust plan can. Integration policy is all too often approached as a race/class binary. In reality, crafting an integration plan that serves students of varying racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds is complex, and requires the inclusion of multiple factors. Each characteristic – race, place, class, socioeconomic status, academic performance, language barriers, etc. – carries with it strengths and challenges, and each adds a unique element to any integration plan. Many districts are reaching for simplistic remedies that can be seamlessly integrated in light of *Parents Involved*, yet each school district in every rural and metropolitan area has geographic particularities that must be taken into consideration when creating an integration plan. We must take immediate care to create these plans, as failure to do so will result in scores of underperforming students who are crippled by an insufficient education – a moral, social, and economic outcome our communities and nation cannot afford.

Indeed, as we discuss below, study after study shows that both racial and economic segregation are critical mechanisms that limit life opportunities, undermine academic performance, and trap low-income people and people of color in underperforming, failing

schools. Studies also show that economically and racially integrated schools prepare students to be effective citizens in our pluralistic society, enhancing social cohesion, and reinforcing democratic values. Such schools promote cross-racial understanding, reduce prejudice, improve critical thinking skills, bolster academic achievement, and enhance life opportunities for students of all races. Communities also benefit from racial and economic integration; reduced residential segregation, high-quality schools, and a diverse workforce all increase the stability of communities and the security of our nation.[32] In order to achieve these benefits, housing and education policies need to be enacted with the explicit goal of fostering integration. The following data demonstrate why the racial and economic integration of all of our schools must be a policy priority if we as a nation are committed to narrowing the achievement gap, breaking the catastrophic cycle of poverty, and meeting the democratic need for a strong public education system.

THE HARMS OF SEGREGATION

It is not surprising that racial segregation contributes to depressed academic outcomes for black and Latino students. What is often left out of the conversation, however, is how many white students are harmed by these underperforming, segregated schools. Schools with high concentrations of poverty and high levels of racial segregation depress academic achievement and deny students the lifelong social and psychological benefits irrespective of the student's race and SES.

Certainly there are high–poverty, nonwhite schools that are thriving, but they are a statistical anomaly. The majority of these schools are mired with a host of factors correlated with decreased academic performance such as larger class size; lower funding;[33] fewer resources, including honors and AP courses;[34] and more inexperienced teachers.[35] In 2008, for example, the

> **In high-minority schools, one in three classes is taught by a teacher outside their subject area.**

Education Trust found that in high minority secondary schools (where over 50% of the student body is comprised of students of color), almost one in three classes is taught by a teacher trained in a different subject area, compared to one in five classes in a low-minority school. The disparities are even more pronounced in math, a subject closely correlated with academic persistence and with success in a number of other fields. For grades 5-8, 70% of the math classes in high minority schools are led by a teacher who does not have either a major or minor in math, or a closely related field.[36] Teacher turnover and transfers are also higher in segregated schools among white teachers – who comprise 85% of the working force. They often transfer to schools with lower percentages of students of color and lower concentrations of poverty.[37] Many of the teachers who remain lack strong academic skills and effective teaching techniques, which impact students' ability to learn; these trends may even contribute to the persistent achievement gap.[38]

Lower Achievement and Test Scores

Recent studies confirm that racial segregation negatively impacts student achievement. In terms of reading achievement, a 2007 study of metropolitan area schools throughout the U.S. found that the black-white gap is statistically much smaller in schools between 25% and 54% black, Hispanic, and Native American. In other words, racially diverse schools show smaller gaps than high schools with fewer than 10%, and more than 55% low-income students of color.[39]

Although math achievement among racially and economically isolated students has improved slightly over the last ten years or so, a significant gap remains in relation to Asian, white, and middle class students.[40] One longitudinal study examined the associations between the black-white and Latino-white test score gaps and changes in schools' racial composition over the four-decade period the study covered. It showed that between 1972 and 2004, increased segregation was linked to significant increases in the black-white and Latino-white test score gaps, even after controlling for other school-level factors and family changes.[41] A similar longitudinal study that controlled for SES followed the same group of youth over a five-year period. It found that school composition—defined as percent students of color—had an adverse effect on both individual math gain score gains from 7th through 12th grade, and on the number and difficulty of math courses high school students completed.[42] Similar studies confirm these findings.[43]

On a local level, a 2004 Boston study shows that only 61% of 10th grade students in high-poverty, high minority schools passed the English/Language Arts graduation test in the 2002-03 school year, compared to 96% of students attending low-minority, low-poverty schools. This is not surprising given that segregated minority schools in the metropolitan area have higher levels of student poverty (97% of minority schools vs. 1% of segregated white schools), lower shares of certified teachers (78% in high-poverty, minority schools vs. 94% in low-poverty, white schools), lower test scores, and lower high school completion rates.[44]

Various studies in the south have similar negative findings. Researchers in one southern district indicate that the achievement of middle and high school students is related to the racial composition of schools they attend. The more time students spent in predominantly black elementary schools the lower their scores on statewide tests, their grade point averages, and their secondary track placements.[45] Similarly, in North Carolina in 2006, data showed that 40 of the 44 lowest-performing high schools were predominantly nonwhite, including 23 that were 80-100% nonwhite. The failure was found to deny students their legal right to a sound, basic education. As to be expected, the highest performing schools were predominantly white.[46]

Segregation within schools, through the process of ability grouping, or tracking, also

denies all students the opportunity of a high-quality education. Furthermore these effects extend beyond academic performance, and into other critical social and academic arenas.[47]

Lower "Promoting Power" and Graduation Rates

A broad assessment of over 13,000 public high schools across the country in 2004 shows that schools with a higher concentration of blacks and Latinos tend to have lower "promoting power," which measures the percentage of students who are promoted each year from grades 9 to 12. Minority isolation is a significant predictor of 'promoting power' following controlling for school resources, student-teacher ratio, free-lunch level, school size and urbanicity.[48] Indeed, majority minority schools are "five times more likely to have weak promotion power than a majority white school."[49] A similar study in metropolitan Boston showed that less than half of students in racially and economically isolated schools graduate on time, compared to more than three-quarters of their peers in low-poverty, low-minority schools.[50]
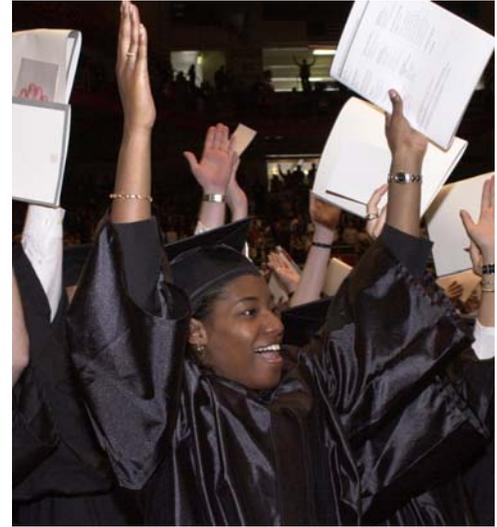
Research shows that minority isolation is also a strong predictor of low graduation rates, even after controlling for other school performance indicators.[51] Research also confirms that all minority groups in racially isolated schools graduate at a lower rate than whites in desegregated or racially isolated schools, even when holding constant the effects of other school performance indicators. White students are also less likely to graduate from racially segregated minority environments than their counterparts in majority white schools.[52] Students in predominantly minority schools are also less likely to graduate from college, even when factoring in students' prior test scores and socioeconomic status.[53]

Some social scientists argue that because of the growing number of minority students in public schools, if existing educational trends continue, our nation risks something it has never before seen: an intergenerational decline in its educational level, a threatening outcome, particularly in light of our knowledge-based, global economy.[54]

> **If educational trends continue, our nation risks an intergenerational decline in its education level.**

Factoring in Home, Neighborhood, and School Disadvantages

Students of color are not only compromised in the classroom, they endure cumulative home and neighborhood disadvantages, including the scarcity of high-quality early-childhood education programs, poor housing stock, relative inaccessibility of healthcare, greater exposure to harmful environmental pollutants, and high crime levels.[55]

The statement: "middle class schools outperform low-income schools" is certainly not surprising. Given all that we know about student achievement and school success, it's difficult to imagine any high-poverty school performing well, although some certainly do. Data sound bytes such as the above run the risk of oversimplifying the issue and obscuring the multiple sources of disparities that converge on schools with high concentrations of students in poverty. These impacts are not only felt during the student's academic tenure, but are life-long. Attending an economically integrated school not only has a deep positive impact on the students' academic performance, but their cumulative earning potential as well. One study following students for almost a decade found that, independent of achievement or family background, students who attended a more middle class school had higher incomes as adults than those who attended higher poverty schools.[56] Furthermore, economic integration in no way decreases the scores of the economically advantaged.[57]

The socioeconomic status of a student body is, without a doubt, a critical factor, which impacts the level of school quality and consequently students' lifelong outcomes; however it is not in and of itself wholly descriptive or predictive. SES is important in part because of all of the additional negative factors that are correlated with it. It may tell us something about the students, and even something about neighborhoods and family backgrounds, but all of these factors have an independent effect on academic achievement. Race matters. Family matters. Neighborhoods matter.

This is to say that, in short, it is complicated, and it becomes problematic when we attempt to make it less so, particularly in a policy arena. Collapsing these factors into an overarching umbrella, such as SES may be convenient for research, but it's inadequate for policy. In order to craft successful integration plans we must disentangle these sources of inequities, understanding how they act independently, as well as in conjunction with each other. These cumulative disparities place students of color at an early academic disadvantage; one study found that African Americans entering kindergarten already performed 34 percentile points lower than their white counterparts.[58] Furthermore they limit opportunity across the lifeline. Disparities across multiple opportunity structures not only confer a multitude of lifelong disadvantage, they also deny students the possibility of harnessing the multiple benefits of diversity and integration.

THE BENEFITS OF INTEGRATION

While racially segregated educational settings are associated with the aforementioned impediments to educational attainment, there are a number of

> **The benefits of integration are life-long, for students of color and whites alike.**

identifiable benefits of being educated in an integrated environment including life-long academic, economic, social, psychological, and democratic ones. Our current segregated system of education is not only systematically denying these benefits for students of color, but for whites as well, particularly as they are the most racially isolated group in our nation's schools.

Positive Effects on Achievement Levels

Longstanding research on academic achievement shows that African American students who attend desegregated schools demonstrate a modest increase in achievement levels.[59] One of the definitive reviews of the early literature concludes that desegregation has been positively linked to increases in black student achievement levels, generating gains on average of .57 of a grade year at the kindergarten level, and on average of .3 of a grade year in student performance at the elementary/secondary school level.[60] Desegregation appears to have a greater impact on reading achievement in comparison to math, [61] although improvements vary by context, appearing somewhat stronger for younger students and those under voluntary desegregation plans.[62] Some argue that since most school reforms have little or no effect on improving students' outcomes, the modest impact that desegregation has on student achievement relative to these other reforms is substantial.[63]

More recent studies confirm the positive links between black students' test scores and their schools' racial diversity,[64] although some question whether standardized tests are a valid indicator of future success.[65] In one of the most comprehensive studies of more than 22,000 schools and 18 million students in 45 States, researchers examined test score information from the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) Act.[66] They found that black and Hispanic students' mathematics gain scores were greater in integrated schools than in segregated ones.**[67]**

On a more local level, researchers in Texas analyzed the impact of racial composition of classmates on the test scores of students, from 4th to 7th grade. The findings suggest that black students who experience decreases in the percentage of classmates who are black over time, demonstrate increased achievement. This relationship held even when other variables such as school quality and peers' achievement were taken into account.[68] The same study also found that decreasing black segregation in schools only negligibly depressed white achievement scores. This bears emphasizing, for numerous studies – both recent and past – suggest that school desegregation has little or no measurable negative impact on white test scores, allaying fears by whites to the contrary.[69]

Among Latinos, one 2006 study found modest positive impacts on average math achievement levels for students in racially integrated schools in

Denver, relative to their Latino counterparts in schools that were more racially isolated.[70] A separate study of 50 Mexican-origin students who had the profile for low achievement (e.g., segregated neighborhoods, low-income, parents without high school diplomas, and Spanish-speaking households) showed that 70% of those who excelled academically in elite colleges and universities had attended desegregated schools.[71]

In addition to increased achievement and test scores at the K-12 level, both experimental and field studies show that college-age students who are exposed to racially diverse cultural knowledge and social perspectives in racially integrated classes experience development of their critical and complex thinking.[72] This is just one example of the multitude of benefits integrated education can also have at the university level.

Additional Benefits

Integrated schools not only positively impact students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds academically, but socially as well. A growing number of studies show that a racially integrated school environment promotes cross-racial friendships,[73] increases comfort levels,[74] and positively impacts attitudes students from one racial group have toward students of other racial groups,[75] reducing stereotypes and bias in many cases.[76] An integrated environment is particularly important during a student's early years, when their attitudes about and understanding of race are not yet concretely shaped.[77] Students who have been educated in a diverse environment place a high value on integration; a survey of high school juniors and seniors in seven major school districts across the nation shows that white students value their interracial experiences as preparation for public life in multiracial settings.[78]

Students in integrated schools have: higher level parental involvement;[79] higher graduation rates;[80] complete more years of education; earn higher degrees and major in more varied disciplines;[81] gain greater access to professional jobs;[82] and have higher incomes, even when controlling for a number of other background characteristics.[83] Further, students attending racially and economically integrated schools benefit from access to informal networks, which may assist students in attending more competitive colleges or attaining better employment.[84] These benefits of integrated education are lifelong; children attending racially diverse schools also live and work in more integrated settings, and have higher levels of civic engagement.[85] Given the shifting demographics of our nation, the increasing globalization of our economy, and the need for individuals who are diversity-fluent, integrated education must be at the forefront of our education reforms.

True Integration and In-School Strategies

Due to segregation within schools, ability grouping and tracking, desegregation efforts

often fail to achieve "true" integration. Conversely, meaningful integration transforms the educational setting, fostering open relationships and exchanges of ideas among students of all races, ethnicities, and classes. Through policy, curriculum, instructors and space, integrated schools and neighborhoods contribute to the construction of a multi-racial equitable democracy. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. made the following distinction:

> Although the terms desegregation and integration are often used interchangeably, there is a great deal of difference between the two. The word "segregation" represents a system that is prohibitive. "Desegregation" is eliminative and negative, for it simply removes legal and social prohibitions. "Integration" is the positive acceptance of desegregation and the welcomed participation of [nonwhites] into the total range of human activities. Integration is genuine intergroup, interpersonal doing. Desegregation then, rightly is only a short-range goal. Integration is the ultimate goal of our national community.[86]

In a recent 'study called "High Schools for Equity," the organizations Justice Matters and The School Redesign Network at Stanford University located five California public high schools that they described as "racially just schools."[87] These schools exemplify what true integration sets out to do. Adopting a structural approach to racism, the research partners adopted clear expectations of what schools would look life if they were to overcome the demeaning ways in which institutions interact to limit life opportunities of impoverished nonwhite students.

Rather than structuring themselves as hostile and dehumanizing places in which impoverished students are allowed to fall through the cracks, racially just schools do whatever it takes to prepare their children to experience a full range of actualization. These schools address the economic and social needs of their students and their families, and embrace their cultures and languages as sources for intellectual growth and communication.

Although important, the researchers did not use test scores or achievement levels to measure "racially just," schools. Rather they looked for good practices in high-poverty, racially isolated schools that embrace "all the joy, discovery, meaning and passion that can be made available in the education of low-income students of color."[88] The schools they identified adopted structures, belief systems and pedagogical practices that provided for increased personalization and relationships between students and teachers; developed rigorous and relevant instruction that connected the students' life experiences with partnerships with industries and higher education; and formalized professional and collaborative support for faculty.

Bringing together students of different backgrounds to learn from one another should remain a central objective of American education, especially as we move toward becoming a majority minority society in a globalizing world. If we fail at this, the country fails. In pursuit of true integration, racially diverse schools can be structured in

ways that make positive outcomes more likely to occur.[89] A significant body of research spanning across the past fifty years stresses the importance of noncompetitive, collaborative contact between students with equal status, from diverse backgrounds.[90] Although this report focuses primarily on the link between racial and economic integration and academic achievement, educators can benefit from the considerable findings demonstrating how to implement integration successfully.[91]

One strategy, detracking curriculum, is showing notable increases in student achievement levels for all students. By detracking mathematics, Railside High School in California, the school was able to close the mathematics achievement gap between white students and students of color.[92] Detracking all subjects in Rockville Center, New York led to an increase in the percentage of African American and Hispanic students passing the Regents exam, from 25% to 75%.[93]

The benefits of an inclusive education are not solely limited to academic underachievers, students of color, or low-income students. The same high school in New York was also able to increase the percentage of white students passing the Regents exam from 54% to 98%. A comparative analysis of Railside High School and two other schools (Railside was considerably more 'urban', with a higher student population of color and greater percentage of English language learners) revealed Railside enrolling 41% of their seniors in Calculus, as compared to only 27% in the other two schools. Finally, studies focused on the Rockville Center middle school, found that after detracking their mathematics courses, the initial high achieving students not only took more advanced courses than their tracked cohorts, they also scored significantly higher in advanced placement calculus. These outcomes show that, when pursuing integration, in-school strategies are effective, not only in creating collaborative environments, but also in increasing academic achievement for all students.

MOVING FORWARD

The remedies and educational initiatives we have enacted thus far have only demonstrated modest amounts of success in part because they are failing to disrupt the cycle of racialized poverty that is creating and reinforcing pervasive, generational, educational inequities. Instead, an approach is needed that proactively sets end goals and adjusts policies and practices in ways necessary to achieve them. Academic achievement has been at the center of our educational end goals nationally, and has in all regards dominated the conversation about public schools. While inarguably academic performance is critical to any student's success, it is one of the many benefits that education confers. Research conclusively demonstrates that denying students the opportunity to learn in integrated environments is not only detrimental to students of color, it has lifelong implications for all students, including whites. Moving forward, it is critical that we establish explicit goals aimed at the creation of integrated schools, and an education system that operates in a just and equitable manner.

In order to create this 21st century school that achieves all of our educational and democratic

Equitable education is the foundation of any legitimate democracy.

objectives, we must take definitive steps toward establishing integrated districts and schools. As demonstrated, these schools would not only serve us individually, but collectively as well, as equitable education is the very foundation of any legitimate democracy. On a large scale, our nation has yet to achieve the type of full, meaningful integration that we discuss above. Although the *Parents Involved* decision limits the means we have available to achieve racial integration, it does not eradicate them. In fact, these cases lay promising legal groundwork for addressing racial isolation across multiple opportunity structures including housing, public health, economic development and transportation. This is critical as this type of systems approach is necessary in order to more effectively reach the goal of narrowing the achievement gap and integrating our schools by race and class.

Systems thinking recognizes mutual causality and relationality. We cannot achieve true integration by approaching education as a separate institution. The "school" system is really part of a larger, connected system, or web, of inter-institutional agents and arrangements. This is best captured in the link between housing and education. While residential segregation usually drives school segregation, integrated schools can help reduce residential segregation,[94] particularly if part of a regional or countywide plan.[95] We must look clearly at the relationship of school policy, housing policy, and fiscal policy to fashion an integration strategy. Although our policies and legal decisions are beginning to shift to recognize this type of interconnectedness between our social structures and institutions, that alone will not move us far enough. Until our public policy catches up with the robust body of research demonstrating the interrelated nature of our opportunity-conferring social structures, we must work within each domain to achieve equity. In education, closing the achievement gap and raising the performance level of all students is on the forefront of policy initiatives. Creating racially and economically integrated schools and districts cannot only achieve this, it can provide a whole host of additional life-long psychological, social, and economic benefits.

There are a number of school districts with student assignment plans designed explicitly to foster racial and/or economic integration from Berkeley to Boston.[96] Each student assignment plan is unique given their historical efforts to desegregate, student populations, and geographic particularities. Some districts such as Wake County Public Schools System have demonstrated notable success in closing the achievement gap at a rate that outpaced the state of North Carolina by limiting the number of low-income students (<40%) and students performing below grade level (<25%) within each building.[97] The Wake County plan is somewhat unique, however, because of a very high race/class correlation, and because Raleigh has a county-wide school system.[98]

Most large metropolitan areas are highly fragmented with multiple school districts operating independently with separate funding streams. This presents a particular challenge for desegregation efforts for large urban districts such as Cleveland Metropolitan School District, comprised of 50,000 students. For this district, it is a physical impossibility to achieve a racial or economic balance when nearly 77% of the student population is black and 83% is on free and reduced lunch.[99] Nebraska offers a model that can movie beyond the limitations of regional fragmentation with the

establishment of "Learning Community Agreements."[100] This progressive education plan includes all districts, involves over 105,000 students, and is based on a tax-sharing plan that allocates school funding based on need. The plan, which has passed into law but is yet to be implemented, is based on focus schools, magnets, and pathway schools that are designed explicitly to achieve a diverse student body.

Certainly in any integration plan the socioeconomic status of the students' families must be considered, as well as the academic performance level of the students' peers. However, as demonstrated, socioeconomic status alone cannot do the work of race; districts that substitute a race-conscious integration plan for a race-neutral one have found their schools inevitably resegregate. Furthermore, racial integration has a number of benefits unrealized through other types of integration. While we continue to advocate for racial integration- as research supports placing it at the center of any student assignment policies, we recognize that following the *Parents Involved* decision, many districts are hesitant to utilize race-conscious policies and instead are searching for race-neutral ones. As an alternative to overly simplistic economic integration plans, a multi-variant approach deliberately seeks to uphold racial integration without the use of race-conscious policies. Including such factors in the assignment plan as neighborhoods of spatially concentrated poverty, and neighborhoods of low educational opportunity, are moderately successful at maintaining racial integration.[101] These alternate student assignment plans are a key to creating a diverse, integrated environment while promoting high educational performance.

If one of our most important goals is to raise the achievement of our low–income students and students of color, we must look to the literature, look to best practices in our school districts, and reach out to those who have had success, such as the districts mentioned above. However, educational interventions aimed at raising academic achievement must be mindful of scalability. There are a number of boutique schools, charter schools, and districts which have demonstrated success in closing the achievement gap despite facing such challenges as being under-funded, and having with high concentrations of low-income students of color. While lessons can be gleaned from these anomalies, they all to often held up as examples of schools that pull themselves "up by their bootstraps," with little attention to the unique factors that made such success possible.[102] Many of these success stories are often predicated on factors that are not replicable on a large scale, and fail when universally applied to other districts.[103] Educational policies must take into account individual variations such as student population and community strengths and assets in order to be sustainable and effective.[104] Furthermore they must be inscribed into the policies and practices of the districts and schools, and not dependent on a single education champion.

Education reform typically operates on a dreadfully short timeline; piecemeal reforms are moved in and out of the schools before they are given a chance to work. Furthermore, most of the education remedies pursued today are important in the efforts to achieve educational equity; however, in and of themselves, they are not substantial enough to create sustainable change. Closing the achievement gap between all whites and students of color requires a long-term commitment to doing so, and a comprehensive strategy that

addresses the factors that are conferring disadvantage (such as racially and economically segregated schools) and negatively impacting education (such as teacher quality). This will not happen overnight as reform takes time, particularly efforts aimed at interrupting the cycle of intergenerational oppression. However we must act with a sense of urgency as countless students of all racial, ethnic and economic background are being failed by our flawed education system.

Finally, in enacting any educational change, we must be mindful not to undermine the very nature of the public system of education we are trying to remedy. Our goal should be to lift up all students, and to establish a permanent system that will continue to serve our students for generations to come. Certainly there are a variety of ways this can be accomplished, but our end goal should be a comprehensive, seamless, stable system of public education that gives our students the knowledge, and skills necessary to be full members of our democratic society.

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[1] In collecting studies and their data for this report, we rely heavily on the Brief of 553 Social Scientists as *Amici Curiae* in Support of Respondents, Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1., 127 S.Ct. 2738, 2007, and the meta-analysis of research conducted by Professor Roslyn Arlin Mickelson, Department of Sociology, University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

[2] Richard Fry. *The Changing Racial and Ethnic Composition of U.S. Public Schools.* Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, August 2007.

[3] Throughout this document the term 'minority' is often used in reference to students of color. We retained this wording when referring to a reference that also utilized the term, although the term minority is problematic. Not only is it becoming increasingly inaccurate (as children of color are expected to outnumber whites by 2023) but it also excludes relations of privilege, power, and social inclusion.

[4] Gary Orfield, *Reviving the Goal of an Integrated Society: A 21st Century Challenge,* Los Angeles, CA: The Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles at UCLA, January 14, 2009.

[5] Richard Fry. *The Changing Racial and Ethnic Composition of U.S. Public Schools.* Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, August 2007.

[6] Gary Orfield & Erica Frankenberg. *The Last Have Become First. Rural and Small Town America Lead the Way on Desegregation.* The Civil Rights Project, 2008. Reports on trends in racial and economic segregation by type and size of communities.

[7] J. Iceland, D. Weinberg & E. Steinmetz. *Racial and Ethnic Residential Segregation in the United States: 1980-2000.* U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC: 2002.

[8] A. Bishaw *Areas with concentrated poverty: 1999.* In: Census 2000 Special Reports. Washington DC: U.S. Census Bureau. 2005.

[9] 127 S.Ct. 2738, 2007.

[10] When seeking advice on how to proceed with an assignment plan after *Parents*, the Jefferson County (Louisville) school board, a party to the *Parents* litigation, focused on a number of principles: the importance of diverse schools to the preparation of students for a democratic society, assignments which will result in higher achievement by all students,

the importance of choice among a variety of facilities and programs for each family, predictability for parents, stability and connectedness to the same learning environment for the student, and equity, the fair distribution of resources and programs to all students. Rather than simply use a class-based approach for student assignment, such as the proportion of students receiving free or reduced lunch, they used a number of indicators, such as median income and median home value, the educational level of the parents, teacher qualifications, and test scores. With the aid of mapping produced by the Kirwan Institute, Jefferson Count's revised plans are based on two geographic areas: Area A contains those areas that are below the district average in median household income and the educational attainment of people age 25 or older, and above the district average in the percentage of minority students in the resides area. Area B contains those areas that are the converse of area A. In other words, it contains those areas that are above the district average in median household income or educational attainment of people age 25 or older, and below the district average in the percentage of minority students in the resides area. These areas guided the development of various student assignment approaches by the Board. The Institute suggested a multi-factor geographic approach, which they ultimately adopted, which seeks to create balance across those zones.

[11] According to Roslyn Michelson, the late Asa Hilliard III recast the achievement gap in terms that didn't use whites as the standard. He talked about achievement gaps between what children of color CAN do and what they ACTUALLY do. See T Perry, C Steele, AG Hilliard III (eds.). *Young, Gifted, and Black: Promoting High Achievement Among African American Students.* Boston: Beacon, 2003.

[12] David Chaplin. *Divided We Fail: Coming Together through Public School Choice.* Century Foundation Task Force on the Common School Report. New York: Century Foundation Press, September 2002. Richard Kahlenberg. *All Together Now: Creating Middle classMiddle class Schools through Public School Choice*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2001.

[13] Robert Sampson, Patrick Sharkey & Stephen Raudenbush. *Durable Effects of Concentrated Disadvantage on Verbal Ability Among African-American Children*. PNAS, 105, 2008: 842-844.

[14] MM Kishiyama, WT Boyce, AM Jimenez, LM Perry & RT Knight. *Socioeconomic Disparities Affect Prefrontal Function in Children*. Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience. November 18, 2008. [Epub ahead of print.]

[15] Geoffrey Borman & Maritza Dowling. *Schools and Inequality: A Multilevel Analysis of Coleman's Equality of Educational Opportunity Data*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, 2006. Reports results of their reanalysis of Coleman's data from a national survey of the equality of educational opportunity in American schools as of the mid-1960s. See also, Russell W. Rumberger and Gregory Palardy, *Does Segregation Still Matter? The Impact of Student Composition on Academic Achievement in High School*, Teachers College Record, 107(9): 1999-2045, showing that the average socioeconomic level of students' schools had as much impact on their achievement growth as their own socioeconomic status, net of other background factors. Similar results were found in the Coleman Report: James Coleman et al. *Equality of Educational Opportunity,* Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1966, at 325.

[16] Richard Kahlenberg. *Socioeconomic School Integration*. Poverty and Race Research Action Council, 2001. Retrieved February 1, 2009 from http://www.equaleducation.org/commentary.asp?opedid_900.

[17] Richard Kahlenberg. *Can Separate Be Equal?* The Century Foundation, April 2004. Retrieved February 1, 2009 from: http://www.tcf.org/list.asp?type=PB&pubid=468.

[18] DN Harris. *Ending the Blame Game on Educational Inequality: A Study of 'High Flying' Schools and NCLB*. Educational Policy Research Unit, Arizona State University, 2006. Retrieved February 1, 2009 from: http://www.asu.edu/educ/epsl/EPRU/documents/EPSL-0603-120-EPRU.pdf.

[19] Richard Kahlenberg. *Integration by Income*. American School Board Journal, 193, no. 4, 2006: 51-52.

[20] See more on the race/class convergence at: Jason Reece. *Race, Class and Opportunity: Understanding the Convergence and Divergence of Race & Class in the US*. Columbus, OH: The Kirwan Institute, 2008. Retrieved February 1, 2009 from: http://4909e99d35cada63e7f757471b7243be73e53e14.gripelements.com/presentations/2008_01_16_RaceClassOpportunity.ppt; j.a. powell & S. Menendian. *Progressive Politics: The Strategic Importance of Race*. Columbus, OH: The Kirwan Institute, 2006. Retrieved February 1, 2009 from: http://4909e99d35cada63e7f757471b7243be73e53e14.gripelements.com/publications/ProgressivePoliticsandRaceNov2006.pdf.

[21] Richard Kahlenberg. *All Together Now: Creating Middle classMiddle class Schools through Public School Choice*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2001.

[22] SF Reardon, JT Yun & M Kurlaender. *Implications of Income-Based School Assignment Policies for Racial School Segregation.* Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 28, no. 1. 2006: 49-75.

[23] Socioeconomic diversity has created racial integration only where dramatic economic differences exist between whites and nonwhites. Such a rare situation exists in Raleigh, North Carolina where extreme economic differences in a biracial community made income a successful metric for achieving racial diversity. See Duncan Chaplin. "Estimating the Impact of Economic Integration of Schools on Racial Integration" in *Divided We Fail: Coming Together through Public School Choice*, ed. Century Foundation Task Force on the Common School Report. New York: The Century Foundation Press, 2002: 87-113.

[24] Chungmei Lee. *Denver Public Schools: Resegregation, Latino Style.* Cambridge, MA: Civil Rights Project, January 2006.; Catherine Horn & Michal Kurlaender. *The End of Keyes: Resegregation Trends and Achievement in Denver Schools*. Cambridge, MA: The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, 2006.

[25] SFUSD is actively working toward defining a new Student Assignment System to go into effect for the 2010-2011 school year. For more information on previous plans see: Stuart Biegel. *Annual Report No. 22 of the Consent Decree Monitor, 2004-2005.* Submitted in San Francisco NAACP v. San Francisco Unified Sch. Dist., No. C-78 1445 (N.D. Cal. Aug. 1, 2005).; Stuart Biegel. *Supplemental Report by the Consent Decree Monitoring Team Regarding The Achievement Gap and Related Issues in the San Francisco Unified School District.* Submitted in San Francisco NAACP v. San Francisco Unified Sch. Dist., No. C-78 1445 (N.D. Cal. Mar. 12, 2004). See also William T. Trent.

The Effect of School Racial Composition on Student Outcomes in the San Francisco Unified School District. Unpublished report, on file with San Francisco Unified School District, December 2005.; Stuart Biegel. *The Report of the Consent Decree Monitoring Team, Report No. 20, 2002-2003.* Submitted in San Francisco NAACP v. San Francisco Unified Sch. Dist., No. C-78 1445 (N.D. Cal. July 31, 2003). See also William Trent. *The Effect of School Racial Composition.* Unpublished report to the SFUSD, December 2005. Finds an association between minority concentration and the test scores of African Americans and Latinos, even after controlling for other factors that might influence student achievement.

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[27] John Logan. *Separate and Unequal: The Neighborhood Gap for Blacks and Hispanics in Metropolitan America*. Albany: NY: Lewis Mumford Center, University of Albany (October 2002).

[28] J. Logan, D. Oakley, and J. Stowell. *Segregation in Neighborhoods and Schools: Impacts on Minority Children in the Boston Region.* Albany, NY: Lewis Mumford Center (2003).

[29] Camille Zubrinsky Charles. "Can We Live Together? Racial Preferences and Neighborhood Outcomes," in *The Geometry of Opportunity: Race and Housing Choice in Metropolitan America*, ed. Xavier de Souza Briggs. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2005: 45-80. Douglas Massey & Nancy Denton. "Table 4.1," in *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993: 86.; Joe T. Darden & Sameh H. Kamel. *Black Residential Segregation in the City and Suburbs of Detroit: Does Socioeconomic Status Matter?* Journal of Urban Affairs, 22, no. 1, 2000: 1-13.; John Iceland, Cicely Sharpe & Erika Steinmetz. *U.S. Census Bureau Class Differences in African American Residential Patterns in U.S. Metropolitan Areas:1990-2000.* Social Science Research, 34, no. 1, March 2005: 252-66.

[30] Sean Reardon, John Yun & Michal Kurlaender. *Implications of Income-based School Assignment Policies for Racial School Segregation.* Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, Vol. 28, No. 1, pp. 49-75, 2006.

[31] Mary Pattillo-McCoy. *Black Picket Fences: Privilege and Peril Among the Black Middle Class.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

[32] See for example: William Peterman & Phillip Nyden. Creating Stable Racially and Ethnically Diverse Communities in the United States: A Model for the Future," Social Policy and Administration, 35, no. 1, 2001.; Consolidated Brief of Lt. Gen. Julius W. Becton, Jr. et al. at 27, Grutter, 123 S. Ct. 2325 (Nos. 02-241, 02-516).

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[41] M Berends & RV Penaloza. *Increasing Racial Isolation and Test Score Gaps in Mathematics: A 30-Year Perspective.* Under review at Teachers College Record.

[42] Xiaoxia Newton. *End of High School Mathematics Attainment: How Did Students Get There?* Teachers College Record (in press).

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