

# Creating Equitable Student Outcomes: How Housing and Education Policy are Intertwined

By Allison Charette



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## **INTRODUCTION**

**T**hroughout American history, the primary determinant of where a child goes to school has been where he or she lives. Even today, with school choice policies becoming more common, 85 percent of public school students attend their assigned neighborhood school.<sup>1</sup> We also know that where families live has a significant impact on the quality of the education they receive. Access to a good education is critical to having opportunities in life. High levels of educational attainment (as measured by test scores, graduation rates, college attainment and other indicators) are associated with higher-paying jobs and lower unemployment.<sup>2</sup>

Yet segregation has been and continues to be a factor in the United States, preventing access to a good education. When housing is racially and economically segregated, local school enrollment tends to reflect those demographics. This paper explains how segregation in education and housing has prevented children across socioeconomic and racial/ethnic backgrounds from achieving the greatest possible academic success. It examines the ways in which the United States has tried over the years to address segregation in education and disparities in academic achievement, and how housing policies and practices remain connected to those efforts.

Between 1988 and 2011, the number of intensely segregated schools – where 1 percent or less of the student body is white – almost tripled from 2,762 to 6,727, with most of the schools located in the Northeast and Midwest.<sup>3</sup> While the numbers of students of color and intensely segregated schools are both growing, growth in the number of students of color does not necessitate growth in the number of intensely segregated schools. Currently, more than half of all public school students in the United States are from low-income households, which are disproportionately households of color.<sup>4</sup> While most measures of school achievement have steadily improved over the years, a sizeable achievement gap remains between students of color and white students and between low-income students and higher-income students.

School system policies partly explain why schools are racially and economically segregated. Such policies determine how district lines are drawn, what schools are available and whether school choice options exist. But segregation also occurs due to factors related to housing, such as affordability, availability, discriminatory policies and practices and zoning regulations. The Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision ruled that segregated public schools were unconstitutional and served as a way to correct for segregated housing patterns.

Since *Brown*, policymakers at the federal, state and local levels have worked to reduce disparities in education using a range of methods, including desegregation busing, magnet schools and school choice. Some have proven more successful than others. And while housing patterns have contributed to school segregation, solutions have rarely come from housing policymakers. HUD's 2015 Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) rule is the agency's first direct effort to desegregate communities.

Understanding the shared histories of discrimination and segregation in education and housing is important because they illustrate the policies, practices and assumptions that have contributed to the current state of education, which is growing more economically and racially segregated.

## 1: SCHOOL DESEGREGATION AND RESEGREGATION

Prior to 1954, “separate but equal” was permitted under the law across the United States. Jim Crow segregation laws in the South, dating back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, required separate accommodations for black and white people. In the North, discriminatory lending, redlining and exclusionary zoning laws largely kept black and white families in separate neighborhoods. Black and white children attended different schools, almost always to the detriment of the black children. With fewer resources, lower-quality facilities and limited access to rigorous academic programs, black students did not receive an equal education.

With the Supreme Court’s unanimous *Brown* ruling in 1954, racially segregated schools became unconstitutional, a major victory for the civil rights movement. Federal district courts were put in charge of overseeing school desegregation and were told to do so “with all possible haste.”<sup>5</sup> However, the Supreme Court did not advise the lower courts and school districts on how best to integrate the schools and did not require a timeline. As a result, school districts often moved slowly, sometimes taking decades even to begin the integration process.

After passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which prohibited racial segregation and discrimination in public facilities (including schools), more districts started to integrate because of court orders. By 1968, one out of three black children were being educated in schools with white children.<sup>6</sup> Also that year, the Supreme Court ordered school officials to produce plans that promised to realistically eliminate school segregation.

Racial integration in schools continued to increase until 1988, when nearly 45 percent of black students attended previously all-white schools. However, several Supreme Court decisions following the *Brown* ruling made it easier for school districts to discontinue desegregation programs and escape court orders to integrate. In 1974, for example, the *Milliken v. Bradley* ruling made it more difficult for metropolitan areas to institute busing across school district lines for the purpose of racial integration.



Additional rulings also complicated efforts to consider race in balancing school enrollment. As white families increasingly moved to the suburbs while black families remained in urban centers, the ruling against mandatory busing to the suburbs meant city public schools resegregated.

School integration was effectively being reversed by segregated housing patterns, which had long existed in northern metropolitan areas<sup>7</sup> and throughout the South.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the end of mandatory busing, several other factors contributed to the resegregation of public schools. Prior to President Reagan's administration, the federal government withheld federal education funds from school districts that did not comply with school integration orders. However, in the 1980s, the Reagan administration cut federal funding for school desegregation, and the U.S. Department of Justice distanced itself from the court orders. Without the involvement of the federal government and its ability to withhold funds from noncompliant districts, enforcement was left to the district courts. During the 1990s and 2000s, courts across the country started to rescind desegregation orders. For the most part, school districts were not required to prove they had eliminated segregation before abandoning their plans, and their actions were rarely monitored afterward.

About 300 of the nearly 750 school districts that were under court-ordered desegregation during the peak in 1988 remain under court order today. The Department of Justice reports that it continues to monitor 178 open federal desegregation court cases.<sup>9</sup> However, an analysis by ProPublica found that many open court orders are not being enforced, and school districts are often unaware of their legal obligations.<sup>10</sup> Data compiled by the National Center for Education Statistics show that school districts grew more segregated after their court orders ended. Within those districts, 53 percent of black students now attend intensely segregated schools, defined as schools where less than 1 percent of the students are white.<sup>11</sup>

While the South today has a lower percentage of segregated schools than any other region in the United States, it lost nearly all progress it had made since 1967.<sup>12</sup> Recent data published by the Government Accountability Office show that the number of schools nationwide where 90 percent of students are both low income and persons of color doubled between 2001 and 2014.<sup>13</sup> In addition, most U.S. high schools with graduation rates of less than 60 percent primarily serve low-income students who are disproportionately black and Hispanic.<sup>14</sup>

Under the Obama administration, school districts had few incentives to integrate students racially and economically, although John B. King, Jr., who was education secretary during the administration's final year, pushed the agency to become more deliberate about desegregation. Current Education Secretary Betsy DeVos has not publicly commented on efforts to desegregate schools, but she has expressed a strong preference for local jurisdiction over public schools, which historically has not often resulted in desegregation programs.<sup>15</sup>

For districts trying to integrate their schools today, it's often an uphill battle. In 2007's *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1* (also known as the PICS case), the Supreme Court ruled that assigning students to schools based on individual racial classification alone, in an effort to increase diversity and prevent racial isolation, was in violation of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment.<sup>16</sup> The school districts of Seattle and Louisville, Kentucky (and Jefferson County, which surrounds Louisville), were ordered to stop or change their voluntary desegregation programs as a result. Due to that ruling, most voluntary school integration programs today use socioeconomic status as the primary means to accomplish both racial and economic desegregation.



## **2: RESIDENTIAL PATTERNS**

**T**hroughout American history, racial segregation in schools has largely been the result of residential segregation. While Jim Crow laws in the South prior to the *Brown* ruling allowed for school segregation regardless of residential patterns, black and white communities generally existed separately from one another. As desegregation took place across the United States, many households made major shifts in choosing where to live. Numerous studies have examined the extent to which school desegregation and racial bias played a role in those shifts.

A 2011 paper by Nathaniel Baum-Snow and Byron F. Lutz studied the question of how desegregation may have fueled changes in urban residential patterns, particularly its influence on white flight – the large-scale migration of white city dwellers to the suburbs.<sup>17</sup> Overall, their analysis found that school desegregation was important in generating changes in the racial composition of neighborhoods in the outlying areas of cities (particularly in the South), and it affected patterns of private school attendance in central city areas (particularly outside of the South).

Among the 93 large urban school districts the paper examined, the aggregate white population fell by 14 percent between 1960 and 1990, and the aggregate black population grew by 53 percent.<sup>18</sup> Census Bureau data over the same time period shows that the total population of white people in the United States increased by 26 percent and the total black population grew by 59 percent.<sup>19</sup> While the aggregate population of black people in cities is close to total black population growth, the imbalance between white people leaving the cities and overall population growth indicates the extent to which white families were moving to the suburbs.

While the findings suggest that school desegregation played a role in white flight and black in-migration to city centers, the magnitudes are only large enough to account for about one-ninth of the gap between central city population growth and metropolitan area growth. In other words, school desegregation was far from the sole driving force behind changes in urban residential patterns over the past 50 years.

This is not to say that race and racial bias have not influenced neighborhood patterns, housing policy and the mobility choices of individual households over that time. In fact, significant evidence suggests that the suburbanization of American cities outside the South – in particular, the movement of white people to the suburbs – took place, in part, due to the start of the Great Migration, when black households migrated from the rural South to the urban North.

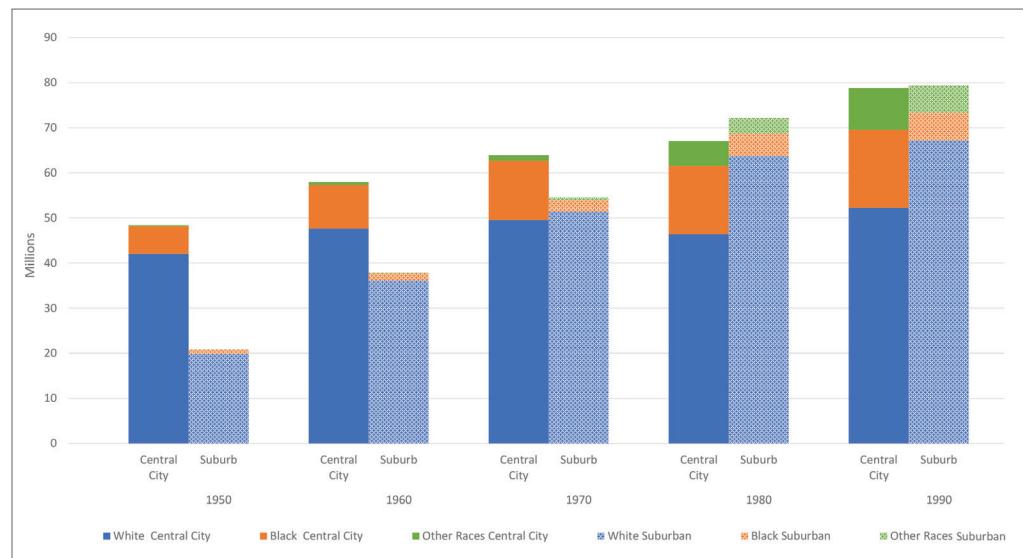
## THE GREAT MIGRATION AND SUBURBAN DEVELOPMENT

Due to several severe economic crises and the South's Jim Crow laws, black households began to move to northern cities in large numbers as early as 1870.<sup>20</sup> Between 1870 and 1900, 324,000 black households migrated north, and another 1.6 million had followed by 1930. At the same time, white parents began taking their children out of integrated schools, while cities started mandating the areas where black families could and could not live. Between 1880 and 1940, residential wards in the 17 largest cities outside of the South went from 6.7 percent racially segregated to 80 percent segregated. While Southern cities also saw an increase in black families moving in, Jim Crow laws largely prevented integration.

Beginning with the New Deal, the federal government got into the business of backing mortgages to expand homeownership.<sup>21</sup> Between 1934 and 1968, the U.S. homeownership rate doubled.<sup>22</sup> Half of those homes were financed by the federal government and nearly all those loans went to white households. Black households were largely unable to access mortgage credit due to

borrower discrimination. Practices such as rental discrimination, residential covenants, redlining, zoning ordinances and highway development through city centers isolated black families in cities (and often specific neighborhoods). Middle and upper-income white households, on the other hand, were able to leave the cities and move to newly created suburban towns facilitated by federal support for mortgages and infrastructure.

**Chart 1: Population by Location and Race, 1950–1990**



Source: Enterprise Community Partners calculations of U.S. Census data as reported in Bicentennial Edition: Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970 and 1980 and 1990 decennial censuses. Suburban population based on "urban fringe" definition.

While the families who were able to move out of cities may not have been solely in pursuit of racial composition preferences, the undeniable result was increased racial segregation. Economist and geographer Charles M. Tiebout wrote that households, or consumer-voters, will pick a place to live based on the goods and service they receive for their taxes, e.g., public schools. If they are unhappy with the quality of those goods and services and can afford better, they will “vote with their feet” and move to a better community. However, while families make mobility decisions based on individual household economics, they also consider their familial and social networks as well as racial composition. An analysis of Census Bureau data shows that families are more likely to choose where they live based on where friends and family live than on public school quality.<sup>23</sup> The self-reinforcing nature of these networks and (constrained) choices may partly explain the persistence of segregated patterns even after overt discrimination was outlawed.

With the federal government supporting the development of suburbs, more households owning a motor vehicle and greater mortgage availability, in the early and mid-1990s, white families increasingly left the cities. Between 1950 and 1975, the number of black families in northern cities doubled, and white families continued to move to the suburbs as schools were ordered to desegregate.<sup>24</sup> White flight during this time not only resulted in fewer white students attending desegregated urban schools, but it also hurt the tax bases for the areas that supported the schools. Less tax revenue meant fewer resources and lower-paid teachers, contributing to lower student achievement levels.

When Congress passed the landmark Fair Housing Act in 1968, racial discrimination in housing was effectively outlawed, but little was done to dismantle the residential segregation that already existed. While the law included a directive for municipalities to affirmatively further fair housing, there was little political will at the time to create or enforce fair housing regulations. It was only recently that the federal government acted to foster diversity and fair housing practices more aggressively with HUD’s AFFH rule in 2015.

## NEIGHBORHOOD INTEGRATION

A critical takeaway from the school desegregation years is that districts that remained committed to long-term desegregation currently have more integrated housing patterns. While racial segregation in schools has largely been a result of housing and neighborhood segregation, research suggests that school desegregation programs can help to reduce residential segregation.<sup>25</sup> An analysis of the 100 largest metropolitan areas found that in regional school districts where schools are racially balanced, the incidence of white flight is reduced, even if the racial mix of the neighborhood changes.<sup>26</sup> This is not to say that school desegregation produced residential integration across the board, but districts that remained committed to desegregation have seen more integrated housing patterns. What this may speak to are the positive outcomes, such as higher academic achievement, that occur when jurisdictions coordinate school desegregation and integrated housing efforts.

Research findings from Jefferson County, Kentucky, whose main city is Louisville, show how school desegregation programs over time can change attitudes toward racial integration in schools and neighborhoods. The county was released from court supervision in 2000, but the city

### Districts that remained committed to school desegregation currently have more integrated housing patterns.

and surrounding county have kept integration policies in place since then through busing and magnet schools. According to a report by The Century Foundation, 98 percent of Louisville-area

residents were opposed to the school desegregation plan when it was first proposed in the 1970s.<sup>27</sup> However, by 2011, a survey found that 89 percent of parents in the school district favored student assignment guidelines that “ensure students learn with students from different races and economic backgrounds.” Additionally, housing segregation decreased in Jefferson County by 20 percent between 1990 and 2010.<sup>28</sup> That decline strongly indicates that students in the Louisville area have experienced the academic benefits of attending diverse schools, and parents have responded to those positive outcomes.



### **3: OUTCOMES FROM SCHOOL DESEGREGATION**

**D**esegregation can bring to mind images of parents protesting on school grounds, attacks on school buses and students entering schools under police escort. In fact, the majority of school districts integrated relatively peacefully and either maintained or improved academic achievement among their black and white students. This section examines some of the long-term outcomes for students and school districts that participated in school desegregation.<sup>29</sup>

#### **ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT – PROGRESS AND GAPS**

The academic achievement gap between black and white students offers interesting insight into the impact of school desegregation. According to reporter Nikole Hannah-Jones, the achievement gap in the United States narrowed by more than half during the years of school integration. Before 1954, it was 40 points; during the 1980s (the peak years of school integration), that gap fell to 18 points.<sup>30</sup> This 22-point drop over the course of 30 years marks

the largest decline in U.S. history.<sup>31</sup>

**The U.S. achievement gap narrowed by more than half during the years of school integration.**

A study by Rucker C. Johnson at the University of California, Berkeley, examined the life

trajectories of children born between 1945 and 1968 and followed them through 2013 to determine the long-term effects of court-ordered desegregation.<sup>32</sup> Johnson found that among black individuals, attending a desegregated school significantly increased educational and occupational attainment, college quality, adult earnings and health status; it also reduced the probability of incarceration. In addition, the study revealed that school desegregation had no negative effects on white individuals across these variables.

In a follow-up to his study, Johnson looked at the outcomes of the children of those who attended racially integrated schools.<sup>33</sup> Many of the children did not attend their parents' integrated schools, with some attending more segregated schools and others moving to more affluent neighborhoods with higher-performing schools. Despite these differences, Johnson found that the children of parents who attended integrated schools generally had better academic outcomes than the children of parents who did not. These academic outcomes include math and reading test scores, grade repetition, high school graduation and college attendance.

Court-ordered desegregation did not, however, yield exclusively positive results for all individuals in all school districts. School desegregation in Boston, for example, faced significant opposition and produced mixed results.<sup>34</sup> Still, school integration resulted in overall positive academic outcomes for both black and white students.

## DIVERSE STUDENT BODIES

As previously discussed, a handful of school districts across the country have continued efforts to desegregate schools. While these districts face numerous obstacles and many have been ordered to discontinue or alter their programs, schools with race-conscious enrollment are less racially segregated than schools without such policies.<sup>35</sup> In addition, less segregated districts continue to academically outperform segregated ones, even when controlling for income.<sup>36</sup>

In Kentucky, Jefferson County has been persistent in its efforts to desegregate, even after the Supreme Court ordered it in 2007 to discontinue or alter its program. The district now places students in suburban and city schools based on socioeconomic status rather than racial background, which essentially creates a racially diverse distribution of students because of income disparities across races.<sup>37</sup> One of the key reasons Jefferson County can have such a program is because it has a consolidated metropolitan government and a school district that includes both city and suburban schools. Most metropolitan areas in the United States have separate governing bodies and school districts for the central city and surrounding towns, making integration more difficult. (The future of Jefferson County's program is in question due to legislation introduced in Kentucky's House of Representatives that would require a return to neighborhood schools.<sup>38</sup>)

Myron Orfield of the University of Minnesota compared academic achievement in Louisville to that in Detroit, a school district ordered to end its busing program by the Supreme Court's 1974 *Milliken v. Bradley* ruling. Following years of white flight in Detroit without an integration

Racially and economically diverse schools are generally positive for all students academically as well as socially.

program, the average black student in 2000 went to a school that was less than 2 percent white. In that same year, the average black student in Louisville attended a school that was half white. According to

Orfield's study, 62 percent of Louisville fourth graders scored at or above basic levels for math in 2011, compared to only 31 percent in Detroit.<sup>39</sup> It is important to note that the Detroit urban area is three times larger than the Louisville/Jefferson County area (and has four times the population density) so physical distance could have affected the success of an integration program in Detroit.<sup>40</sup>

The benefits of diverse schools go beyond academics to include social benefits. Recent research led by Amy Stuart Wells at The Century Foundation examines the existing literature on school diversity and integration and concludes that racially and economically diverse schools are generally positive for all students academically as well as socially.<sup>41</sup> According to the report, students who attend racially diverse schools are exposed to a wider array of experiences, outlooks and ideas that can potentially enhance their education. These racially diverse settings are advantageous to low-income students and students of color, as well as to white and higher-income students. Integrated schools also result in more equitable access to high-quality facilities, more stable staff and lower levels of social disorder.

### Federal Efforts to Increase Educational Equity

With school integration programs winding down by the early 2000s and schools resegregating, the federal government passed legislation to improve low-income schools with a majority of minority students (majority-minority schools). In 2001, President George W. Bush, along with Congress, reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, renaming it No Child Left Behind (NCLB).<sup>42</sup> NCLB included revisions that applied to disadvantaged students, requiring schools to assess the skills of its students and meet certain standards set by the state to receive funding.

NCLB was meant to improve learning environments for disadvantaged students as well as ensure that their schools were being adequately funded. NCLB had widespread impact: states and districts reported an increase in standardized test results, low-performing schools gained more national attention, and the federal government took a larger role in education.<sup>43</sup> However, NCLB also resulted in the diminishment of social studies and arts, mandated more standardized testing regardless of the disparities of resources available to students of different socioeconomic status, and the closure of schools that did not meet the required test scores.

In 2015, President Obama and Congress replaced NCLB with the bipartisan Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).<sup>44</sup> The law modifies many of the provisions relating to standardized testing, giving more accountability to the states as opposed to the federal government. One of its goals is to shift responsibility to the states and influence them to better educate and assist their students while trying to close the achievement gap. It is too soon to tell how effective ESSA will be in improving performance among low-income students and schools.

## 4: SCHOOL SEGREGATION TODAY

**A**lthough the black-white achievement difference shrank from 40 points to 18 points between 1954 and 1988, the gap stopped closing once schools began to resegregate. While academic achievement among black students has improved since 1988, white achievement has also improved, leaving the gap intact.<sup>45</sup> Today, the average black student performs better than only about 25 percent of white students – meaning the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile test score among black students is the same as the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile test score among white students. Research conducted before, during and after court-ordered desegregation shows that racial and socioeconomic segregation nearly always hurts the academic outcomes of students attending high-poverty, majority-minority schools and that test score gaps shrink when students attend racially and socioeconomically diverse schools.<sup>46</sup>

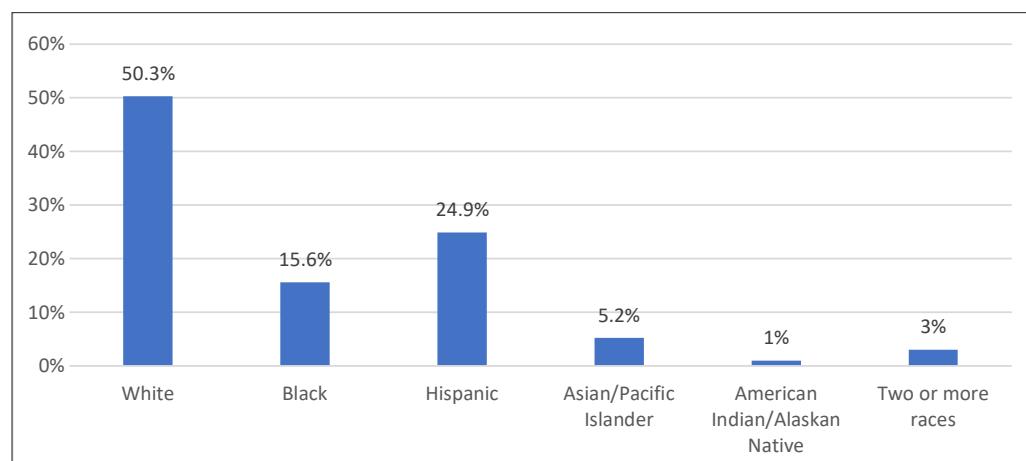
## DEMOGRAPHICS AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Since the *Brown* ruling, research has consistently shown that segregated majority-minority schools produce lower academic outcomes than other schools.<sup>47</sup> According to data from the U.S. Department of Education, white student performance does not suffer in majority-white schools as it does for students of color in majority-minority schools, even when controlling for income.<sup>48</sup>

While black students make up 15.4 percent of the public school population in the United States,<sup>49</sup> white students in 2011 attended schools that had an average of 9 percent black enrollment and black students attended schools with an average of 48 percent black enrollment.<sup>50</sup> Just as achievement disparities existed between black and white schools prior to the *Brown* ruling, there is still a significant achievement gap today between schools that are majority-minority and majority-white. A report by The Civil Rights Project finds that the achievement gap for black students grows larger the longer they remain in segregated schools.<sup>51</sup> By the eighth grade, black students in segregated schools are three grade levels behind in math and reading.

The report also finds that the growth in school segregation has been most dramatic for Hispanic students, and Hispanic students in segregated schools experience negative academic outcomes similar to black students. Between 1970 and 2014, the Hispanic population in the United States increased from 9.6 million to 55.4 million.<sup>52</sup> The Hispanic population is growing faster than any other in the country, and about one-third of Hispanics in the United States, or 17.9 million people, are under the age of 18. Since the mid-1960s, the number of Hispanic students in public schools has quintupled.<sup>53</sup> While the issue of school segregation had largely affected black students, it now affects Hispanic students as well.

**Chart 2: Distribution of Students in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools by Race/Ethnicity in 2013**



Source: National Center for Education Statistics

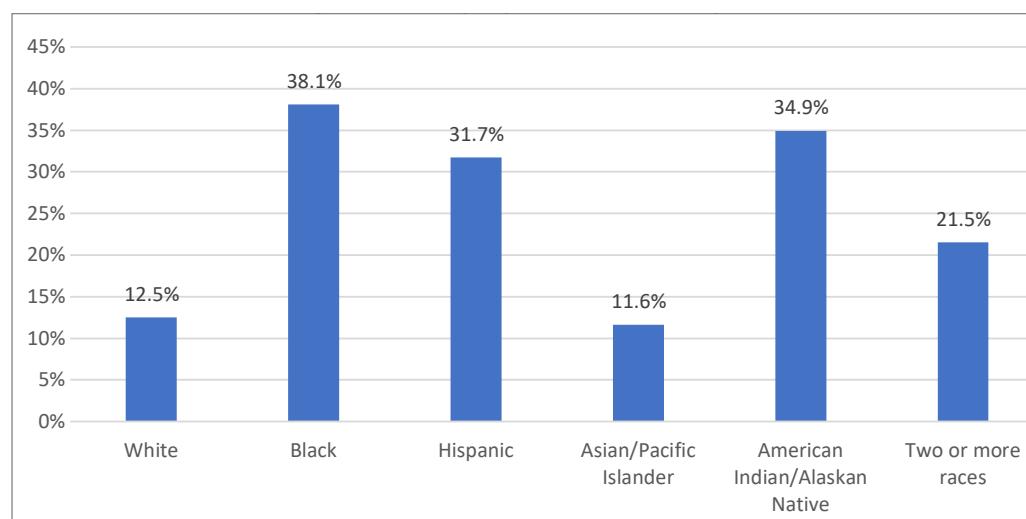
Economic segregation, which is often a contributing factor to racial segregation today, also has negative impacts on students. According to a study by the Center for Education Policy Analysis, students in high-poverty school districts score an average of four grade levels below students in higher-income districts.<sup>54</sup> And because a higher proportion of black and Hispanic children come from poor families, students of color disproportionately attend schools in those districts.<sup>55</sup> In addition, while lower-income students consistently score lower on standardized tests than high-income students, lower-income white students score higher than lower-income black students. A separate study by The Brookings Institution shows that school districts are becoming more economically homogenous.<sup>56</sup>

The rise in segregated schools has long-term impacts on students. In his study, Rucker C. Johnson found that students who attend segregated majority-minority schools are more likely to live in segregated neighborhoods as adults, and are therefore more likely to send their kids to segregated schools.<sup>57</sup> Without intervention, this cycle is likely to continue.

### MAJOR CHALLENGES

Many reasons explain poor academic achievement levels in low-income, segregated schools. Here, we focus on three key reasons. First, many of the students experience daily stressors that others do not. Their families often live below the poverty line (see chart 3) and in neighborhoods suffering from severe disinvestment as well as higher crime and violence. Their homes are more likely to be unsafe, unhealthy and/or unaffordable, and often located in isolated communities that are disconnected from grocery stores, health care services, transit and other healthy lifestyle options.

**Chart 3: Distribution of Children Under Age 18 in Families Living in Poverty by Race/Ethnicity in 2014**



Source: National Center for Education Statistics

Second, schools in low-income, segregated neighborhoods often struggle with overcrowding, under-enrollment, chronic absenteeism and limited parental involvement. In addition, the school buildings are often in poor structural shape, which can create environmental and health issues such as mold, limited ventilation and other factors that potentially damage students' ability to learn.

Third, budgetary shortfalls plague most low-income, segregated schools, contributing to lower academic achievement. Funding for schools comes from the federal, state and local governments with about 90 percent provided by local sources, often from property taxes.<sup>59</sup> Nearly half of the funds generated through property taxes are spent on public schools.<sup>60</sup> This creates a significant disparity, as wealthier communities predominantly made up of homeowners generate more revenue than impoverished communities populated by renters, where schools have fewer resources. Residential patterns and zoning laws not only impact where children attend school, but also how much funding their schools receive.

Unlike middle- and upper-income households, low-income households often cannot move to a community where the schools are better because the barriers to entry are too high. If high-priced single-family housing is the only option available to buy or rent, rather than multifamily rental or below market rate options, only affluent households will benefit from the well-funded school system.





In San Francisco, the Walking School Bus program is designed to lower absenteeism while helping students begin their day in a safe and healthy fashion.

### A Safe, Healthy Way to Walk to School

Each morning in San Francisco's historic Potrero Hill community, a designated adult, or "driver," leads children to the neighborhood school on foot, stopping at front doors to greet and pick them up. The Walking School Bus program offers children a safe, healthy way to get to school in time to begin their school day with breakfast.

The program is an extension of HOPE SF, a large-scale public housing revitalization initiative in San Francisco that prioritizes homes for current residents while also investing in high-quality housing and broad-scale community development. HOPE SF focuses on the city's most vulnerable families, increasing their access to affordable homes in a thriving mixed-income community with connections to good schools and living-wage jobs.

The Walking School Bus launched in 2014 as part of an effort to reduce the high rate of chronically absent students among HOPE SF students – 53 percent. The HOPE SF public-private-philanthropic partnership is led by the city and county of San Francisco, Enterprise Community Partners and The San Francisco Foundation.<sup>58</sup>

## POLICIES PERPETUATING SCHOOL SEGREGATION

Before the *Brown* ruling, race was generally used to determine where students attended school. Schools in both the North and South could decide whether white or black students could enroll, which also affected where families lived. However, discriminatory school policy – neither then nor today – is not the only factor preventing children from attending racially integrated schools. More than 60 years after *Brown*, racial separation and inequitable education continue. The way school districts or attendance zones are drawn also creates segregation. While these zones are primarily designed to balance how many students attend each school, they have historically been used to separate affluent and low-income populations as well as white and black students.

School district lines have also had a significant influence on resource allocations. As noted earlier, the vast majority of school funding comes from local sources like property taxes, in most cases leaving low-income renter communities with limited resources for their schools. Estimates show that high-poverty school districts spend up to one-third less per pupil than lower-poverty districts.<sup>61</sup> These funding disparities typically correlate with disparities in educational outcomes.

Discriminatory housing policies have also helped to perpetuate school segregation. Just as with schools, most residential areas in the United States (particularly in northern cities) once had explicit policies outlining where black families could and could not reside, and whether they could purchase a home at all. Housing discrimination based on race was outlawed with the signing of the Fair Housing Act and the 1968 *Jones v. Mayer Co.* Supreme Court decision.

But other types of residential regulations have continued as more subtle forms of discrimination. For example, exclusionary zoning regulations, which remain prevalent in jurisdictions across the United States, can prevent the development of multifamily and low-cost housing. Such policies disproportionately exclude low-income households and people of color. While there are often single-family homes available to rent in most communities, rents for single-family homes are, on average, \$100 higher per month than rents for apartment units.<sup>62</sup> The difference is due to several factors, including size, number of rooms and yard space.

Rising income inequality also contributes to segregation among families with children. According to a 2016 study by sociologist Ann Owens, local school options play a role in racial segregation between neighborhoods, as higher-income families (who are disproportionately white) have more resources to live in communities with the best schools.<sup>63</sup> Today, income segregation is twice as high among households with children as those without, and as the middle-class shrinks and the gap between high- and low-income households grows, communities and schools are less and less likely to be socioeconomically mixed.<sup>64</sup>

Housing and school policies appear to be based more on economics today than on race. When presented with a choice, families will most likely pick the highest-performing school to which they have access. However, access based on economics nearly always has racial implications. The United States has significant income and wealth gaps between black and white households<sup>65</sup>—disparities that are rooted in discriminatory policies, both past and present. As of 2014, 16 percent of all U.S. public schools, more than 15,700 schools, have student bodies that are at least 75 percent black or Hispanic and 75 percent low-income.<sup>66</sup>

Many changes in housing patterns and education policy and practice have occurred since school desegregation, yet the fact remains that schools and neighborhoods continue to be racially and economically segregated. Johnson's research, the period of active integration and the experience of Jefferson County all illustrate that no policy intervention to this day has been as effective at racially mixing schools and closing the academic achievement gap as school desegregation.



## **5: SHIFTING HOUSING PATTERNS**

**S**ince the *Brown* ruling, residential patterns have changed significantly. Many cities are experiencing revitalization as middle- and upper-income white households move to urban centers. Metropolitan areas have become more economically segregated and the number of high-poverty census tracts has increased. In addition, lower-income households are being pushed out to the suburbs where they have less access to critical resources like public transportation. With these changes and the resegregation of schools, federal policymakers have worked to address inequities born out of segregated housing patterns. The 2015 AFFH rule not only aims to encourage jurisdictions to improve fair housing, but also to improve access to good schools for all children.

## CONCENTRATED POVERTY

One of the most important changes in residential patterns over the past 20 years is the significant increase in areas of concentrated poverty. A 2015 study by The Century Foundation found that the number of high-poverty census tracts — areas with 40 percent or more of the population living in poverty — has increased by 76 percent since 2000.<sup>67</sup> And in those areas, the population has almost doubled, from 7.2 million to 13.8 million people. Borderline high-poverty areas, in which 20 to 40 percent of inhabitants are impoverished, also have increased.

The majority of people living in high-poverty areas are households of color. Hispanics are the fastest growing population in these areas. Among black families living in highly concentrated poverty areas, the fastest growth has been in medium-sized metropolitan areas with roughly 500,000 to 1 million residents.<sup>68</sup> Research also shows that black families earning \$75,000 a year are more likely to live in high-poverty tracts than white families earning \$40,000 a year, suggesting that racial background better determines residency in a high-poverty area than economic factors.<sup>69</sup>

Importantly, high-poverty areas often have schools with large shares of impoverished students, and as covered earlier, both the environment and the school can negatively impact student achievement. The Century Foundation also found that poor children are more likely to live in high-poverty census tracts than poor adults.<sup>70</sup>

## SUBURBAN POVERTY

While large cities continue to have the most areas of highly concentrated poverty, suburbs currently have the fastest growth in the number of poor people living in high-poverty census tracts. According to an analysis by The Brookings Institution, almost 1.2 million low-income suburban residents lived in concentrated poverty between 2010 and 2014.<sup>71</sup> That is nearly double the number between 2005 and 2009 and almost three times as many as in 2000.

Research shows that the spread of poverty to suburban areas adds to the challenges of serving low-income households because these communities are often ill equipped to provide residents access to vital resources and services, including affordable homes near jobs, transit options and social connectivity.<sup>72</sup>

While living in the suburbs poses significant challenges for people living in poverty, a paper published by the National Education Policy Center argues that this change in residential patterns could be a rare opportunity to diversify schools.<sup>73</sup> Local officials and school districts can take advantage and prioritize neighborhood and school diversity by building affordable housing, changing zoning rules and adapting school enrollment policies. Gentrification in cities creates a similar opportunity to increase diversity in schools and neighborhoods.

## GENTRIFICATION

While the suburbs are seeing a rise in poverty rates, many large cities across the United States are experiencing an influx of residents who are more likely to be white and affluent.

Gentrification can benefit cities in many ways, such as creating a larger tax base, more economic growth and increased business activity. However, for low-income families already in these areas, gentrification can create a number of problems, related to both housing and education.

With more people moving to cities and not enough rental housing to meet the demand, housing costs are up, even in areas that were once distressed. Low-income households are being pushed out of their neighborhoods and into other parts of the city or the suburbs.

While the process of gentrification may keep some neighborhoods economically and racially mixed for a number of years, area schools are not necessarily becoming more diverse. Families who move to city neighborhoods do not always send their children to the nearest public school.<sup>74</sup> Instead, parents may send children to private schools or take advantage of public school choice policies.

When lower-income families are displaced by higher-income families without children or don't use the neighborhood schools, enrollment drops, which lowers the school's funding. Studies have also shown that when higher-income parents choose to use the neighborhood schools, they can have a disproportionate influence over school policy.<sup>75</sup>

This is not to say that gentrification does not have its benefits. But when the process occurs without preserving affordable housing, displacement and segregation are more likely to occur. In her research, Amy Stuart Wells positions gentrification as an opportunity to lock in diversity in neighborhoods and schools.<sup>76</sup> If local officials are conscious of these demographic changes and prioritize diversity in housing and public education policy, neighborhoods and schools may be able to maintain some racial and socioeconomic diversity.



A community of opportunity is one in which the available pathways for all residents lead to positive outcomes, including housing stability, education, health and well-being, economic security and mobility.

### Opportunity360

While many people are working hard and making choices that should lead them to better opportunities, opportunity continues to be harder to reach because of where they live. Opportunity is defined as a set of circumstances, or pathways, that make it possible for people to achieve their goals, no matter the point at which they start. From a community's quality of education to its transit systems and nearby health care services, we need better tools to assess the degree of opportunity that exists in a specific place, understand barriers to opportunity for residents in a neighborhood, and identify trends in data to implement and evaluate programs with the potential to enhance opportunity.

To provide a comprehensive approach to understanding communities and addressing community challenges, Enterprise has developed Opportunity360. Opportunity360 identifies the pathways to greater opportunities in any neighborhood in the United States, using cross-sector data, community engagement and measurement tools. With this insight, partners in community development will be better positioned to make smart investments and collaborative policy solutions that transform communities across the country.

## AFFIRMATIVELY FURTHERING FAIR HOUSING

While housing patterns have shifted significantly in recent years, people of different races and income groups continue to live separately. The federal government took a more active role in efforts to combat patterns of segregation with the Obama administration's release of its final rule on AFFH in July 2015. The rule is intended to clarify obligations related to the 1968 Fair Housing Act, which requires that communities that receive HUD program funds must work to overcome segregation and "affirmatively further fair housing." However, until recently, communities had no comprehensive guidance on how to do so and limited tools to assist them in that process.

HUD's AFFH Assessment Tool provides questions, data and maps as a guide for states, jurisdictions and local governments to complete an Assessment of Fair Housing plan. The assessment examines factors contributing to segregation, patterns of racially or ethnically concentrated areas of poverty and disparities in access to opportunity to equip local entities with developing strategies to overcome these factors.



The assessment measures access to opportunity by capturing factors such as education, employment, transportation, low-poverty exposure and environmentally healthy neighborhoods.<sup>77</sup> Specific to education, the assessment prompts municipalities to describe any disparities in access to proficient schools and the relationship between residency patterns and proximity to proficient schools.

Municipalities are expected to use local education data to create a more complete picture of school proficiency and access to education. A school proficiency index is available to those completing the assessment, based on the performance of fourth-grade students on state exams. A

supplementary index adjusts for the percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch. The assessment asks jurisdictions to describe how school-related policies, such as enrollment, affect a student's ability to attend a proficient school and asks which legally protected classes under the Fair Housing Act (which includes persons of color) are least successful in accessing proficient schools.

Access to quality education is critical to fair housing analyses because of how residency affects where children attend school. Under the new rule, any municipality using HUD funding for programs such as the HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) and Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) is now required to complete the assessment and demonstrate that protected class groups have access to proficient schools. If a jurisdiction shows significant disparities in access to proficient schools, HUD may reserve the right to withhold federal funds.

The first assessments were completed in fall 2016, so it was too early to assess their comprehensiveness or impact at the time this report was produced. However, the process of completing the assessments alone has the potential to bring together federal, state and local agencies to engage in discussions about increasing access to opportunity. Just as the *Brown* ruling had an impact on school desegregation, the assessments completed because of the AFFH rule could ultimately affect residency patterns, and transit and school access policies for low-income households and households of color.

There have been legislative efforts to undermine and rescind the AFFH rule, and the Trump administration's position on the rule is not yet fully established, leaving the future of the rule uncertain. However, numerous jurisdictions working with HUD to comply with the rule have already affirmed their commitment to continue to affirmatively further fair housing as the rule requires, whether or not it remains in effect.<sup>78</sup>

## **6: THE RISE OF SCHOOL CHOICE**

**T**he school desegregation court orders that began with the *Brown* ruling have largely come to an end, but governments and school districts have continued to work to improve student outcomes across the board. In recent decades, the concept of school choice, which includes charter schools, open-enrollment policies and private school vouchers, has become increasingly common, particularly in large metropolitan areas. While 85 percent of students nationwide attend their assigned neighborhood public school, that number is 54 percent in cities.<sup>79</sup> Most school choice options were not developed to desegregate schools, but instead to provide students with educational opportunities outside their neighborhood school, and in many cases, they have. In other cases, they can result in less funding for traditional public schools, inconsistent school enrollment and higher levels of racial and socioeconomic segregation.

Since first opening in 1991, charter schools have expanded rapidly. Between the 2000-2001 and 2013-14 school years, enrollment in public charters increased from 0.5 million to 2.5 million students while the percentage of public charter schools rose from 2.1 percent to 6.6 percent. In the 2013-14 school year, 5 percent of the nation's public school students attended charter schools.<sup>80</sup> Charter schools have achieved varying levels of achievement and popularity.

Washington, D.C., for example, has embraced public charter schools, with 44.5 percent of public school students currently attending them.<sup>81</sup> The only city with a higher percentage of students in charter schools is New Orleans, which instituted a 100 percent public charter school system following Hurricane Katrina. However, a number of charter-related issues impact education equity, including the application process, transportation limitations, standards for success and accountability.

While currently popular in certain areas, it is not clear whether charter schools will continue to grow or if their numbers will level off. The Trump administration has shown – with the release of its budget blueprint for fiscal year 2018 – support for expanding charter schools, private school vouchers and other public school alternatives. President Trump's education budget would include a \$168 million increase for charter schools (50 percent above the current level) as well as a new \$250 million private school choice program.<sup>82</sup> Education Secretary DeVos also favors school-choice options and will likely seek to expand them.



Magnet programs and schools, which were used to increase school diversity even before most desegregation orders were rescinded, are also public school options in many urban settings. They often attract students who are white and affluent into city schools that are majority-minority and lower-income. Magnet programs are awarded extra funding to invest in specialty programs, which create the incentive for more affluent students to travel to the school. During the 2013-14 school year, there were about 3,254

magnet schools in the United States serving 2.6 million students (5.2 percent of all public school students).<sup>83</sup> While these schools have brought together students from diverse backgrounds, there are often racial and socioeconomic disparities between classrooms, particularly when only a subset of students at a school participate in the magnet program. In remarks made to the Magnet Schools of America 2017 National Policy Training Conference, Secretary DeVos praised magnet schools and indicated that the Department of Education will continue to support them, though to what extent remains unclear.<sup>84</sup>

Public school open-enrollment programs have been increasingly used by cities to allow families to pick which school they want their child to attend. Cities will often use lottery systems to determine who will attend which public school.

Changes in how students are selected for schools put more responsibility on parents, when the sole determinant used to be where a family lived. While the concept of school choice is meant to level the playing field regardless of where families live, the system disproportionately favors

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The parents of higher-income students often have greater access to information on school quality, and better transportation options to access the high-performing schools regardless of location.<sup>85</sup>

In addition, the application process for school enrollment can be long and challenging, making it difficult for low-income parents to navigate. For example, as part of their application process, New Orleans' top three charter schools require the parent and child to complete a set of steps that include hand-delivering an application to the school during regular business hours, attending a curriculum meeting and submitting the child's standardized exam results.<sup>86</sup> These requirements disproportionately burden parents who lack flexibility at work and/or do not have reliable transportation, hindering them from successfully applying to the school. This is one example of how choice policies remain limiting for low-income students. Even when presented with options, low-income students still face additional challenges to enroll.

## **CONCLUSION**

**O**ver the last century, both the housing and education sectors have struggled with segregation, disparate quality and unequal outcomes among people of different racial and economic backgrounds. The United States continues to struggle with those disparities today.

This paper examines the recent histories of housing and education, identifying key moments of change and highlighting their impacts on one another. Given the overlapping interests of these fields, it is important for educators and housing leaders to work closely to address issues arising from segregation. Decades of research and evaluation have demonstrated that students benefit from learning in a racially and economically mixed environment.<sup>87</sup> However, achieving diversity in housing, schools and communities has been, and remains, a significant challenge.

Today, housing organizations working in low-income, racially segregated neighborhoods often serve the same residents as the schools located in those struggling areas. They have similar goals and challenges, with interdependent measures for success. Housing organizations are often in a strong position to help provide low-income families with access to good schools. They can develop affordable homes in high-opportunity neighborhoods with good schools, close to transit that connects to better schools, or in low-income areas as part of larger revitalization efforts that includes schools. In communities with school choice, housing organizations can provide guidance and support to parents on navigating the enrollment process for high-quality schools.

State and local governments also have an impact on whether residents of affordable housing have access to good schools. They can support policies or direct locally generated funds that encourage or require developers and communities to build affordable homes in areas with access to good schools. They can incentivize school districts to develop enrollment policies that diversify student populations. State and local governments can also encourage greater collaboration and coordination between school districts and housing agencies. Additionally, the federal government's efforts to clarify obligations related to affirmatively furthering fair housing may ultimately affect schools.

By reviewing patterns of segregation with an eye toward redirecting resources and developing new revitalization strategies, the housing sector has an opportunity and a responsibility to work closely with the education sector to jointly support diversity efforts in schools and neighborhoods.

A healthy and affordable home, combined with a solid education, can determine whether a child grows up to truly thrive and achieve his or her potential. It is critical for all stakeholders to work together to help raise academic achievement and create strong neighborhoods and opportunities for all children.

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