E PLURIBUS... SEPARATION
DEEPENING DOUBLE SEGREGATION FOR MORE STUDENTS

By Gary Orfield, John Kucsera and Genevieve Siegel-Hawley

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report shows that segregation has increased seriously across the country for Latino students, who are attending more intensely segregated and impoverished schools than they have for generations. The segregation increases have been the most dramatic in the West. The typical Latino student in the region attends a school where less than a quarter of their classmates are white; nearly two-thirds are other Latinos; and two-thirds are poor. California, New York and Texas, all states that have been profoundly altered by immigration trends over the last half-century, are among the most segregated states for Latino students along multiple dimensions.

In spite of declining residential segregation for black families and large-scale movement to the suburbs in most parts of the country, school segregation remains very high for black students. It is also double segregation by both race and poverty. Nationwide, the typical black student is now in a school where almost two out of every three classmates (64%) are low-income, nearly double the level in schools of the typical white or Asian student (37% and 39%, respectively). New York, Illinois, and Michigan consistently top the list of the most segregated states for black students. Among the states with significant black enrollments, blacks are least likely to attend intensely segregated schools in Washington, Nebraska, and Kansas.

School resegregation for black students is increasing most dramatically in the South, where, after a period of intense resistance, strong action was taken to integrate black and white students. Black students across the country experienced gains in school desegregation from the l960s to the late l980s, a time in which racial achievement gaps also narrowed sharply. These trends began to reverse after a 1991 Supreme Court decision made it easier for school districts and courts to dismantle desegregation plans. Most major plans have been eliminated for years now, despite increasingly powerful evidence on the importance of desegregated schools.

The Obama Administration, like the Bush Administration, has taken no significant action to increase school integration or to help stabilize diverse schools as racial change occurs in urban and suburban housing markets and schools. Small positive steps in civil rights enforcement have been undermined by the Obama Administration's strong pressure on states to expand charter schools - the most segregated sector of schools for black students. Though segregation is powerfully related to many dimensions of unequal education, neither candidate has discussed it in the current presidential race.

The consensus of nearly sixty years of social science research on the harms of school segregation is clear: separate remains extremely unequal. Schools of concentrated poverty and segregated minority schools are strongly related to an array of factors that limit educational opportunities and outcomes. These include less experienced and less qualified teachers, high levels of teacher turnover, less successful peer groups and inadequate facilities and learning materials. There is also a mounting body of evidence indicating that desegregated schools are linked to important benefits for all children, including prejudice reduction, heightened civic engagement, more complex thinking and better learning outcomes in general.

In this report, we summarize the most rigorous research to date showing that segregated schools are systematically linked to unequal educational opportunities. Using data from the National Center on Education Statistics, we explore how enrollment shifts and segregation trends are playing out nationally, as well as in regions, states and metropolitan areas.

This country, whose traditions and laws were built around a white, middle class society with a significant black minority, is now multiracial and poorer, with predominately nonwhite schools in our two largest regions, the West and the South. In the following report, we underscore the fact that simply sitting next to a white student does not guarantee better educational outcomes for students of color. Instead, the resources that are consistently linked to predominately white and/or wealthy schools help foster real and serious educational advantages over minority segregated settings. For these reasons, it remains vital to explore and understand the extent to which other racial groups are exposed to white students.

This report suggests a number of specific ways to reverse the trends toward deepening resegregation and educational inequalities. Two related but smaller reports provide a special focus on the South and the West, the two most racially diverse regions in the country.

Major findings in the reports include:

U.S. Enrollment Growing Rapidly More Diverse

- In 1970, nearly four out of every five students across the nation were white, but by 2009, just over half were white.
- Latino enrollment has soared from one-twentieth of U.S. students in 1970 to nearly one-fourth (22.8%). Latino students have become the dominant minority group in the Western half of the country.
- White students account for just 52% of U.S. first graders, forecasting future change.

Double School Segregation by Race and Poverty

- The typical black or Latino today attends school with almost double the share of low-income students in their schools than the typical white or Asian student.
- In the early 1990s, the average Latino and black student attended a school where roughly a third of students were low income (as measured by free and reduced price lunch eligibility), but now attend schools where low income students account for nearly two-thirds of their classmates.
- There is a very strong relationship between the percent of Latino students in a school and the percent of low income students. On a scale in which 1.0 would be a perfect relationship, the correlation is a high .71. The same figure is lower, but still high, for black students (.53). Many minority-segregated schools serve both black and Latino students. The correlation between the combined percentages of these underserved two groups and the percent of poor children is a dismaying .85.

Racial Segregation Deepens for Black and Latino Students

- In spite of the dramatic suburbanization of nonwhite families, 80% of Latino students and 74% of black students attend majority nonwhite schools (50-100% minority), and 43% of Latinos and 38% of blacks attend intensely segregated schools (those with only 0-10% of whites students) across the nation.
- Fully 15% of black students, and 14% of Latino students, attend "apartheid schools" across the nation, where whites make up 0 to 1% of the enrollment.
- Latino students in nearly every region have experienced steadily rising levels of concentration in intensely segregated minority settings. In the West, the share of Latino students in such settings has increased fourfold, from 12% in 1968 to 43% in 2009.
- Eight of the 20 states reporting the highest numbers of students attending schools under apartheid conditions are located in the South or Border states, a significant retrenchment on civil rights progress.
- The nation's largest metropolitan areas report severe school racial concentration. Half of the black students in the Chicago metro, and one third of black students in New York, attend apartheid schools.
- Latino students experience high levels of extreme segregation in the Los Angeles metro, where roughly 30% attend a school in which whites make up 1% or less of the enrollment.

White Students Isolated with Other White Students; Black and Latino Students Have Little Contact with White Students

- Though whites make up just over half of the nation's enrollment, the typical white student attends a school where three-quarters of their peers are white.
- White students account for about 64% of the total enrollment in the Northeast, but the typical black student attends a school with only 25% whites.
- Exposure to white students for the average Latino student has decreased dramatically over the years for every Western state, particularly in California, where the average Latino student had 54.5% white peers in 1970 but only 16.5% in 2009.

The Uneven Distribution of Racial Groups among Schools

- The *dissimilarity index,* a measure of the degree to which students of any two groups are distributed randomly among schools within a larger geographical area, shows that much of the shifts outside the South are driven primarily by changing demographics, particularly the relative decline in the percent of white students and growth of the percent of Latino students. During the desegregation era in the South, desegregation plans more than offset the impact of changing demographics. Now there are no such plans in most communities.
- Nationally, though black-white residential dissimilarity had declined markedly, black-white school dissimilarity remains virtually unchanged as desegregation efforts are dissolved. In the South, black-white school dissimilarity has increased since 1990.
- The most extreme levels of black-white school dissimilarity exist in the Chicago, New York, Detroit, Boston, St. Louis, and Pittsburgh metropolitan areas.

These findings highlight the effects of inertia and indifference towards integration in U.S. schools since the l970s, as well as the Supreme Court's reversal of desegregation policies. Success in creating diverse schools requires early and thoughtful action at all levels—within schools and school districts, local governments, civil rights groups, the media, state governments, and via federal policy in education, civil rights and housing.

In this report, we offer a number of recommendations for policymakers, school officials, local community members, parents, and others dealing with demographic transformation and the persisting segregation of public schools:

Creating Awareness

- Local journalists should cover the relationships between segregation and unequal educational outcomes and realities, in addition to providing coverage of high quality, diverse schools.

- Civil rights organizations and community organizations supporting school integration should study existing trends, observe and participate in boundary changes, school siting decisions and other key policies that make schools more segregated or more integrated.

Advocacy

- Local fair housing organizations should monitor land use and zoning decisions, and advocate for low-income housing set asides in developing new communities attached to strong schools, as has been done in Montgomery County, just outside Washington, D.C.
- Local educational organizations and neighborhood associations should vigorously promote diverse communities and schools as highly desirable places to live and learn; an essential step in breaking the momentum of flight and transition in diverse communities.

Legal Enforcement

- The Justice Department and the Office for Civil Rights need to take enforcement actions under Title VI in some substantial school districts in order to revive federal policy sanctions for actions that either foster segregation or ignore responsibilities under desegregation plans.
- Housing officials need to strengthen and enforce site selection policies for projects receiving federal direct funding or tax credit subsidies so that they support integrated schools rather than foster segregation.

Government Policies

- The program of voluntary assistance for integration should be reenacted, building on the Obama Administration's small and temporary Technical Assistance for Student Assignment Plans (TASAP) grant. The renewed program should add a special focus on diverse suburbs and gentrifying urban neighborhoods (which now normally fail to produce diverse schools).
- At the state level, recent developments in Ohio offer important lessons in how to create and sustain policy around the issues of reducing racial isolation and promoting diverse schools, such as how to create district student assignment policies that foster diverse schools, and inter-district programs like city-suburban transfers and regional magnet schools.
- At the regional level, the creation of regional magnets and regional pro-integration transfer programs, as is the case in Connecticut, could provide unique educational opportunities that would support voluntary integration. Providing funds for existing

regional transfer programs such as METCO in the Boston area would be a positive step in the same direction.

Our political and educational leaders, who have passively accepted deepening school segregation, need to find some of the same courage that transformed our society in the mid-twentieth century. The challenges we face now are far less intense than what those earlier leaders had the strength to overcome. Many things can be done, at all levels of government and in thousands of communities, to move towards a new vision of educational and social equity. There is much to learn about how to create lasting and successful diverse schools that can shape a successful multiracial society. The time to begin is now.