

Title: School desegregation and student achievement

Date: December 2015

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Question: >> Is there any research regarding the effects of desegregation on student achievement?

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### Response:

We have prepared the following memo with references on the effects of desegregation on student achievement. Citations include a link to a free online version, when available. All citations are accompanied by an abstract, excerpt, or summary written by the author or publisher of the document. We have not done an evaluation of the methodological rigor of these resources, but provide them for your information only.

### References

Baker, S., Myers, A., & Vasquez, B. (2014). Desegregation, accountability, and equality: North Carolina and the nation, 1971-2002. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 22(115-121), 1-26.

*Abstract:* Using North Carolina as a lens to illuminate broader national developments, this paper examines how and why educational policy in the United States turned away from a civil rights agenda of opportunity and embraced test-based accountability as a way of promoting racial equality. We show that comprehensive desegregation, enforcement of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and Great Society Programs expanded educational opportunities for African Americans, fueled significant increases in black educational achievement and attainment, and brought African Americans closer to equality with whites by the 1980s. We situate the turn to accountability in a political context shaped by an increasingly conservative political environment, and examine three overlapping waves of test-based accountability that began in North Carolina in the late 1970s and spread throughout the region and the nation in the decades that followed: the minimum competency movement of the late 1970s and early 1980s, the standards based reforms of the 1980s, and the more comprehensive and coercive forms of high stakes testing in the 1990s. We argue that the southern political leaders who shaped U.S. educational policy turned to test-based accountability as a politically expedient alternative to the task of equalizing educational opportunities for African Americans. Civil rights organizations endorsed test-based accountability, but we find little evidence that test-based approaches improved African American educational outcomes. Opportunity policies, we conclude, did more to promote racial equality in educational achievement and attainment than test-based accountability.

Bifulco, R., Buerger, C., & Cobb, C. (2012). Intergroup relations in integrated schools: A glimpse inside inter-district magnet schools. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 20(28), 1-27. Retrieved on October 29, 2015, from <http://www.redalyc.org/pdf/2750/275022797028.pdf>

*Abstract:* The frequency and quality of intergroup contact within racially and ethnically diverse schools has potentially important implications for the achievement of desegregation goals. The analyses presented here use survey data to assess intergroup contact within a sample of ten interdistrict magnet schools in Connecticut. Findings indicate frequent intergroup interactions within interdistrict magnet schools, but also that the perceived quality of intergroup relations differs across racial groups and both the frequency and quality of intergroup contact varies considerably across schools. Students who report higher quality intergroup relations in their school also tend to report more positive academic environments and more positive attitudes towards other groups. Together these findings indicate that attention must be paid to intergroup relations within diverse schools if the goals of integrated schooling are to be realized.

Bifulco, R., Cobb, C., & Bell, C. (2009). Can interdistrict choice boost student achievement? The case of Connecticut's interdistrict magnet school program. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 31(4), 323-345.

*Abstract:* Connecticut's interdistrict magnet schools offer a model of choice-based desegregation that appears to satisfy current legal constraints. This study presents evidence that interdistrict magnet schools have provided students from Connecticut's central cities access to less racially and economically isolated educational environments and estimates the impact of attending a magnet school on student achievement. To address potential selection biases, the analyses exploit the random assignment that results from lottery-based admissions for a small set of schools, as well as value-added and fixed-effect estimators that rely on pre—magnet school measures of student achievement to obtain effect estimates for a broader set of interdistrict magnet schools. Results indicate that attendance at an interdistrict magnet high school has positive effects on the math and reading achievement of central city students and that interdistrict magnet middle schools have positive effects on reading achievement.

Bischoff, K. (2009). Causal effects of school context: Evidence from a random-assignment desegregation plan. *American Sociological Association Conference Papers*.

*Abstract:* Racial and ethnic disparities in academic achievement and social outcomes are persistent features of the U.S. educational landscape. One prominent legal and policy remedy for these disparities is school desegregation. It is unclear, however, to what extent inequalities stem from differences in school environments or from differences in family background and other extra-school attributes. In this research, I exploit a random assignment of students to a desegregation program to answer the question, "Given the same family background, what is the effect on minority students of attending a more integrated, higher-achieving school?" This design allows me to obtain unbiased estimates of the effects of school context on academic outcomes. The analysis uses data from a voluntary interdistrict desegregation plan that allows minority students to transfer from a largely minority and low-income district into neighboring, mostly white and upper middle-class districts. Additionally, while prior research has focused almost exclusively on black children, this research promises to examine the effects of school context on Hispanic children as well. The research draws upon and has implications for social psychological theories of inter-group contact as well as social structural and institutional theories that explain the reproduction of inequality. The results will also have significant implications for race- and socioeconomic-based school attendance policies as well as school choice initiatives. (*REL West Note: This is not a peer-reviewed paper, but its topic is especially relevant to the request and so is included for consideration.*)

Bush, V. (2012). Community PTAs believe: It takes a village to improve education. *Our Children: The National PTA Magazine*, 37(5), 14-15. Retrieved on October 29, 2015, from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ973983.pdf>

*Abstract:* The academic achievement of children is a national concern. Thus, PTA focuses not only on individual schools, but also on the communities they serve. One of the innovative approaches to community involvement in education is the community PTA. Community PTAs are not tied to a single school, but instead offer membership and involvement to various groups within a community. While community PTAs can be more inclusive, they also pose challenges. Community PTAs form for a variety of reasons. In Chicago, adults feeling left out of the education decision-making process have been the prime motivator behind the creation of community PTAs. For Black Star Community PTA (BSCPTA), the hot-button issue that galvanized parents to action was the Chicago Public School (CPS) system's 2009 proposed policy for admitting students to its coveted magnet and selective-enrollment schools following the end of federal scrutiny of desegregation efforts. The proposed policy, which focused on enrolling more children living near the schools, had the potential to shut out children from poorer, more distant neighborhoods from attending the best of these schools. BSCPTA members protested the CPS policy before meetings at the Board of Education and mobilized parents on the issue. An important part of BSCPTA's mission has been to encourage development of other community PTAs. Unfettered by connections to a single school or community, BSCPTA continues to utilize the Urban Family Engagement Initiative (UFEI) template and has begun to reach out to parents throughout the city. The group worked with Illinois PTA and other community partners to host Leading with Literacy events at several public libraries across Chicago last fall. BSCPTA has already inspired the creation of Educational Village Keepers (EdVK) Community PTSA, founded by a retired school teacher.

Chapman, T. K. (2008). Desegregation and multicultural education: Teachers embracing and manipulating reforms. *Urban Review: Issues and Ideas in Public Education*, 40(1), 42-63.

*Abstract:* The purpose of this paper is to examine the remnants of desegregation curricular reforms in a small urban district. This study documents the affects of various policies that were implemented to create equity and equality in urban, multi-racial and socio-economically diverse classrooms. These reforms were created due to a court desegregation order that demanded the district take multiple steps to raise the academic achievement levels of students of color in the district. Using the lens of Critical Race Theory to examine issues of interest-convergence and the effects of court-ordered desegregation initiatives, the researcher documents how teachers have come to terms with two major curricular changes that work in conjunction with other curricular reforms. Research that considers the affects of large-scale policy initiatives on classroom practices is necessary to further current conversations on successful reform implementation.

Chavez, L., Frankenberg, E., & University of California, L. C. (2009). Integration defended: Berkeley Unified's strategy to maintain school diversity. *Civil Rights Project*. Retrieved on October 29, 2014, from <http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/integration-defended-berkeley-unified2019s-strategy-to-maintain-school-diversity>

*Abstract:* In June 2007, the Supreme Court limited the tools that school districts could use to voluntarily integrate schools. In the aftermath of the decision, educators around the country have sought models of successful plans that would also be legal. One such model may be Berkeley Unified School District's (BUSD) plan. Earlier this year, the California Supreme Court declined to review the appellate court's decision upholding the legality of the district's integration plan; the decision noted the district did not use students' race-ethnicity in a way that violated Proposition 209, an initiative that prohibits the preferential or discriminatory use of race-ethnicity in public institutions. This report explores the BUSD plan and examines what it offers as lessons in a time of growing

demographic and legal complexity. BUSD's integration plan uses two levels of geography--zoning and planning areas, which are 4-8 block groups that are coded according to their racial-ethnic, economic and educational demographics--in its "controlled choice" plan. While managing families' school preferences and a set of priorities, the plan seeks to maximize school diversity so that each school reflects its zone-wide diversity as measured by the planning areas. What is innovative about BUSD's plan is that every student living in a particular planning area is assigned the same diversity code, based on the area's population characteristics regardless of their own individual characteristics. Drawn from a year-long study of the BUSD integration plan, this report reviews the district's historical commitment to desegregation, describes how the current plan works, analyzes the extent the plan desegregates the schools despite being located in racially and socioeconomically segregated neighborhoods, and discusses the plan's implementation including the policies and practices that promote participation in its controlled choice assignment plan and matriculation once assigned. Academic Achievement is appended.

Crosnoe, R. (2009). Low-income students and the socioeconomic composition of public high schools. *American Sociological Review*, 74(5), 709-730.

*Abstract:* Increasing constraints placed on race-based school diversification have shifted attention to socioeconomic desegregation. Although past research suggests that socioeconomic desegregation can produce heightened achievement, the "frog pond" perspective points to potential problems with socioeconomic desegregation in nonachievement domains. Such problems are important in their own right, and they may also chip away at the magnitude of potential achievement benefits. In this article, I report conducted propensity score analyses and robustness calculations on a sample of public high schools in the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. As the proportion of the student body with middle- or high-income parents increased, low-income students progressed less far in math and science. Moreover, as the proportion of the student body with middle- or high-income or college-educated parents increased, low-income students experienced more psychosocial problems. Such patterns were often more pronounced among African American and Latino students. These findings suggest curricular and social psychological mechanisms of oft-noted frog pond effects in schools and extend the frog pond framework beyond achievement itself to demographic statuses (e.g., race/ethnicity and SES) perceptually linked to achievement. In terms of policy, these findings indicate that socioeconomic desegregation plans should also attend to equity in course enrollments and the social integration of students more generally.

Daniel, P. K., & Walker, T. (2014). Fulfilling the promise of Brown: Examining laws and policies for remediation. *Journal of Negro Education*, 83(3), 256-273.

*Abstract:* In 1954, the United States Supreme Court decided *Brown v. Board of Education* and ordered the desegregation of students by race in public schools. Many of the states as well as the federal executive branch of government expressed some level of opposition to this order. Over time, courts have taken alternative positions on the education of persons of color, some of which have the potential for undermining the original ruling in the *Brown* decision. This research will offer an analysis of these trends in American education, exposing the paradox of how an emphasis on supposed achievement tends to trump educational equality for African American students. The merits of transitioning to a supports-based system of accountability--facilitated by collaboration among multiple stakeholders--are analyzed for viability as both a conceptual and pragmatic next step for fulfilling the promise of *Brown*.

Goza, F., & Ryabov, I. (2009). Adolescents' educational outcomes: Racial and ethnic variations in peer network importance. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 38(9), 1264-79.

*Abstract:* Little attention has been paid to the role of peer social capital in the school context, especially as a predictor of adolescents' academic outcomes. This study uses a nationally representative (N = 13,738, female = 51%), longitudinal sample and multilevel models to examine how peer networks impact educational achievement and attainment. Results reveal that, in addition to those factors typically associated with academic outcomes (e.g., school composition), two individual-level peer network measures, SES and heterogeneity, had significant effects. Although educational attainment was generally worse in low SES schools, for all ethnic groups higher attainment was associated with attending schools with higher concentrations of minority students. At the individual level, however, membership in integrated peer networks was negatively related to high school graduation for Asians, Latinos, and non-Hispanic whites, and to GPA for Asians and Latinos, as only African-American achievement increased in more racially/ethnically heterogeneous peer networks. Our results suggest that co-ethnic and co-racial peer friendship networks should not be viewed as obstacles to the educational accomplishments of today's youth. In fact, in many cases the opposite was true, as results generally support the ethnic social capital hypothesis while providing little corroboration for oppositional culture theory. Results also suggest that co-racial and co-ethnic ties may mediate the negative effects of school choice, or more specifically of between-school socioeconomic segregation. Consequently, we conclude that school policies aimed at socioeconomic desegregation are likely to beneficially affect the academic outcomes of all race/ethnic groups.

Hunter, R. C. (2011). Public school desegregation and education facilities. *School Business Affairs*, 77(2), 24-26. Retrieved on October 29, 2015, from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ914700.pdf>

*Abstract:* Early federal court decisions in school desegregation placed little emphasis on public school facilities. Those early decisions focused primarily on requiring black and white students to attend the same schools and requiring the integration of teachers. What does the literature say about the relationship between student achievement and educational facilities? Will better educational facilities produce higher student achievement? In this article, the author provides a rationale for improving school facilities. He believes that, although there is no conclusive evidence that school facilities have a direct effect on student achievement, his experience with school desegregation in Kansas City, Missouri, has cemented his perceptions that there is a connection.

Kurlaender, M., & Yun, J. (2005). Fifty years after Brown: New evidence of the impact of school racial composition on student outcomes. *International Journal of Educational Policy, Research, and Practice*, 6(1), 51-78. Retrieved on October, 29, 2015, from <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Fifty+years+after+Brown%3a+new+evidence+of+the+imp+act+of+school+racial...-a0137764896>

*Abstract:* Over the last half-century, many researchers have studied and written about school desegregation and race in American schools. Most studies on the benefits and costs to school desegregation are primarily from the 1960s and 1970s in response to the changes brought about from "Brown," the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and the "Green" case in 1968--a decision that led to increased enforcement of "Brown" and authorized busing. These studies concentrated largely on the impact of desegregated schooling on the experiences of African American students and focused on school systems that had been intentionally segregated. In order to address the different outcomes and include other racial groups, the authors present findings from a case study of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools, a district that can legitimately be described as multiracial with three different racial/ethnic groups (black, white, and Hispanic) present in large numbers. The instrument used in this research, the Diversity Assessment Questionnaire (DAQ), is a 70-item

student survey. The data employed for this analysis are based on the survey administered in the fall of 2000 to 10,844 students, attending 33 high schools throughout the Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

Patterson, J. A., Niles, R., Carlson, C., & Kelley, W. L. (2008). The consequences of school desegregation in a Kansas town 50 Years after "Brown". *Urban Review: Issues and Ideas in Public Education*, 40(1), 76-95.

*Abstract:* This article examines the legacy of segregation and desegregation in the town of Parsons, Kansas. We argue that school desegregation, the goal of which was to increase access and equalize educational opportunities for African Americans, did not have that desired affect. Fifty years after the closing of the all-Black Douglass School, Parsons' citizens had not openly acknowledged the effects this event had on the African American community. Three generations later, African American student achievement still lags behind that of White students. These unresolved issues have contributed to a number of losses in the Black community, including loss of Black teachers and loss of talented Black young people. We use theories of social capital and cultural capital as a framework to illustrate how White, middle class students had greater access to school resources, and to identify the social and cultural resources within the Black community that the school district could build upon, such as strong leadership and a sense of resolve and resiliency. *REL West note:* This article found that desegregation did not have positive effects on student achievement.

Potter, H. (2013). Boosting achievement by pursuing diversity. *Educational Leadership*, 70(8), 38-43. Retrieved on October 29, 2015, from <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/may13/vol70/num08/Boosting-Achievement-by-Pursuing-Diversity.aspx>

*Abstract:* What's the best way to turn around a persistently low-performing school? Is it better to simply replace the principal and teachers, or is it necessary to reopen under new charter management? Maybe policymakers are asking the wrong question, writes Halley Potter. What if, instead of replacing the adults at the school, we changed the mix of students, rebalancing enrollment so that the school does not serve a concentration of the most disadvantaged students? In the last decade, the number of public school districts in the United States pursuing such socioeconomic desegregation has grown from just a handful to more than 80. Adding to this list, a number of charter schools now seek socioeconomic diversity as part of their design. Research has found that this approach can raise the academic achievement of low-income students without lower the achievement of higher-income students, as well as giving all students the benefits of a diverse learning environment. Yet balancing student enrollment by socioeconomic status remains logistically, politically, and operationally difficult. In this article, Potter examines strategies used by charter schools that can provide a model for other schools, both public and charter, that are looking for the most effective ways to enroll and serve a diverse student body.

Ryabov, I. (2013). The influence of co-racial versus inter-racial peer friendships on academic achievement of Asian-American adolescents. *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, 4(3), 201-210.

*Abstract:* Traditionally, prior research attempted to explain academic success of Asian American in terms of family influences and ethnic resilience, while leaving the role of peer networks and in a school context unexamined. The present study attempted to address the gap in the literature by focusing on two school contextual factors, namely socioeconomic composition and within-school racial segregation. These two contextual factors were explored with respect to their influence and role on Asian American adolescents' academic achievement and engagement. The independent variables also included immigrant generational status, family social capital measures, and school socioeconomic status (SES). The study used multilevel, hierarchical modeling to estimate the aforementioned effects. The sample was drawn from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent

Health (Waves I and III; n = 1,585). The multivariate results showed that school SES and racial segregation were directly associated with academic achievement and attainment and they had stronger effects for immigrant Asian American students than for their native coracial counterparts. In terms of policy, these findings suggested that Asian American students would benefit from school desegregation plans designed to foster social class integration.

Smrekar, C. E. & Goldring, E. B. (2009). *From the courtroom to the classroom: The shifting landscape of school desegregation*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

*Book description:* From the Courtroom to the Classroom examines recent developments pertaining to school desegregation in the United States. As the editors note, it comes at a time marked by a general downplaying of race & ethnicity as criteria for the allocation of public resources, as well as a weakening of the political forces that support busing to achieve racial integration. The book fills a growing need for a full-scale assessment of this recent history and its effect on schools, children, & communities.

Townsend Walker, B. L. (2014). Sixty years after Brown v. Board of Education: legal and policy fictions in school desegregation, the individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and No Child Left Behind. *Multiple Voices for Ethnically Diverse Exceptional Learners*, 14(2), 41-51.

*Abstract:* The Brown v. Board of Education (1954) Supreme Court decision ruled that segregated schools were unequal and unconstitutional. Since Brown's ruling, scholars have questioned whether African American children have benefitted from school desegregation and subsequent school reform initiatives. In spite of several post-Brown school reform movements, the achievement gap persistently impacts African American learners including those with, or likely to be labeled with, disabilities. Thus, this article examines several legal and policy fictions inherent in Brown, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the No Child Left Behind Act (2001). After discussing the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) data, strategies are identified to eradicate legal and policy fiction in school reform for African American learners.

Tyson, K. (2011). *Integration interrupted: Tracking, black students, and acting white after "Brown"*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

*Book description:* An all-too-popular explanation for why black students aren't doing better in school is their own use of the "acting white" slur to ridicule fellow blacks for taking advanced classes, doing schoolwork, and striving to earn high grades. Carefully reconsidering how and why black students have come to equate school success with whiteness, *Integration Interrupted* argues that when students understand race to be connected with achievement, it is a powerful lesson conveyed by schools, not their peers. Drawing on over ten years of ethnographic research, Karolyn Tyson shows how equating school success with "acting white" arose in the aftermath of Brown v. Board of Education through the practice of curriculum tracking, which separates students for instruction, ostensibly by ability and prior achievement. Only in very specific circumstances, when black students are drastically underrepresented in advanced and gifted classes, do anxieties about "the burden of acting white" emerge. Racialized tracking continues to define the typical American secondary school, but it goes unremarked, except by the young people who experience its costs and consequences daily. The rich narratives in *Integration Interrupted* throw light on the complex relationships underlying school behaviors and convincingly demonstrate that the problem lies not with students, but instead with how we organize our schools.

## Methods

### Keywords and Search Strings Used in the Search

("School desegregation") AND ("student achievement" OR "student outcomes") AND ("effects")

### Search of Databases

EBSCO Host, ERIC, PsychInfo, PsychArticle, Google, and Google Scholar

### Criteria for Inclusion

When REL West staff review resources, they consider—among other things—four factors:

- **Date of the Publication:** The most current information is included, except in the case of nationally known seminal resources.
- **Source and Funder of the Report/Study/Brief/Article:** Priority is given to IES, nationally funded, and certain other vetted sources known for strict attention to research protocols.
- **Methodology:** Sources include randomized controlled trial studies, surveys, self-assessments, literature reviews, and policy briefs. Priority for inclusion generally is given to randomized controlled trial study findings, but the reader should note at least the following factors when basing decisions on these resources: numbers of participants (Just a few? Thousands?); selection (Did the participants volunteer for the study or were they chosen?); representation (Were findings generalized from a homogeneous or a diverse pool of participants? Was the study sample representative of the population as a whole?).
- **Existing Knowledge Base:** Although we strive to include vetted resources, there are times when the research base is limited or nonexistent. In these cases, we have included the best resources we could find, which may include newspaper articles, interviews with content specialists, organization websites, and other sources.

This memorandum is one in a series of quick-turnaround responses to specific questions posed by educators and policymakers in the Western region (Arizona, California, Nevada, Utah), which is served by the Regional Educational Laboratory West (REL West) at WestEd. This memorandum was prepared by REL West under a contract with the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES), Contract ED-IES-12-C-0002, administered by WestEd. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.