

POLICY BRIEF

Standard Wealth Distribution & the Urban School: Discriminatory Land-Use Policies in Application

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Introduction

Although trends in income inequality in the United States have received a substantial amount of attention over the past two decades, trends in the geographic distribution of income have been left relatively unexamined. As the affluent and poor become increasingly isolated from one another, the social and economic worlds and interests of the two groups will naturally diverge, with important implications for public finance and the provision of public services.

Using data available from 2013, it is apparent that there are eye-opening differences in wealth and poverty distribution across America on the state level, for roughly half of the nation in its entirety. According to the table shown below, southern states suffer significantly greater regarding students who enter the school as low-income. Income and class segregation declined over the last half century as the rich and poor have become more evenly distributed throughout the country, and too, the degree of spatial separation between affluent and poor families declined at the regional, state, and metropolitan levels.

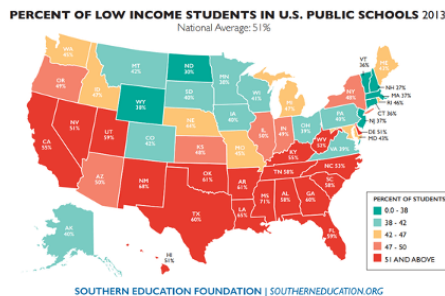


Figure 1. Child Fund International, 2013

According to the chart above, it is apparent that the majority of southern states are primarily comprised of a student-population residing at or below the poverty level. This is no coincidence

in the examination of wealth distribution of central cities in the south, especially when aligned with the academic insufficiencies representing most of the southern region and inadequate teacher pay. The concentration of affluence and poverty has increased in neighborhoods, leading to significant class segregation within metropolitan areas, thus magnifying the differences in academic achievement between urban schools and those in more affluent communities.

Current Land-use regulations affect the collective wellbeing of a community and maintain a critical role in meeting the overarching goals of environmental sustainability, economic growth and social inclusion. Public policy primarily uses spatial and land use plans and environmental and building code regulations to affect land use. These instruments restrict how land can be used, but cannot influence how individuals and businesses would like to use land. They can also take a long time to elaborate and even longer to effect change. Often, they leave little scope for efficient, community and market driven land use patterns to emerge. Current zoning regulations of a town are a strong indicator of future zoning and development. Wealthy towns tend to protect more land and allow for less housing and commercial/industrial development while poorer towns tend to permit higher density commercial/industrial development. However, a town's current residential or commercial density is a much better indicator of expected future density than income. In addition, towns further from a central city

zone less open land for commercial/industrial uses, protect more open land, and put tighter constraints on density.

Policy

Much of the analysis of school quality determinants focuses narrowly on the effects of financial resources on school performance. In contrast, Thomas Nechyba of Duke University explores how financing alters school quality in a framework that explicitly incorporates the fact that financing changes may alter the characteristics of neighborhoods, private school attendance rates, and political voting outcomes; he develops these insights in a simulation model calibrated to data from New Jersey (Pack, McNally & Gale, 2016). By examining the various policies in a single, consistent model, he is able to isolate the interlocking roles of different factors in determining the impact of changes in school finance. Nechyba examines the effects of centralizing school finance, changing state aid formulas, and issuing state-funded vouchers. A major result of Nechyba's analysis is that the indirect effects of policy changes on school quality—for example, those that arise from households moving or students changing from public to private schools—often have a greater impact on school performance than the direct effects of funding levels and the availability of resources.

Among the specific results: centralizing school finance raises housing prices, reduces private school attendance, reduces spending per pupil in public schools, and narrows school quality differences across districts. Funding



formulas that provide state aid not targeted at poor school districts result in school improvement in wealthy districts and also cause larger inequalities across districts. However, targeted state aid administered only to poor school districts achieves greater increases in school quality for all schools. State-funded vouchers reduce quality at poor-performing public schools as students choose to attend better public and private schools. At the same time, families in wealthier neighborhoods move to areas with more affordable housing and send their children to private schools using vouchers. As a result, overall school quality in poor districts rises slightly because of the increased quality of the new private schools. Vouchers have a negative impact on the public schools in wealthier districts as affluent families move out, causing a decline in quality and support of the public schools.

The crux of inequality in current land-use regulations can be found in the deliberate protection of designated property, commonly rooted in wealthy communities, for the centralized control of wealth. The process of distinguishing valuable developments from those considered invaluable, for the specific purpose of keeping wealthy neighborhoods wealthy, inherently renders poor communities void of resources. By analyzing a city's housing segregation, implications of low socioeconomic status, and inequitable school resources thereby, a sounding call to reform current land-use regulations will be declared.

Since the housing market is heavily segregated by race as well as income, better schooling is most common in white neighborhoods. On average, black and Latino students are attending schools with nearly twice as many classmates who are poor as white students are. By 2006, two-

fifths of black and Latino suburban children were in intensely segregated schools where student bodies were at least ninety percent black and Latino, even though the suburbs remain overwhelmingly white; forthright social inequality at the expense of the poor. In all actuality, housing segregation benefits the wealthy, and imposes a forcible stagnancy on the poor, leaving the resource-filled schools at the doorsteps of the former, and resource-deprived schools as the burden of the latter.

The reality of inequitable school resources lead directly into discussions assessing the achievement gap in urban schools across America, and the ways in which such inequalities have pervaded teacher's lounges and professional development workshops for decades, however, not much attention is paid to the opportunity gap from which such differences in achievement are created. Linda Darling-Hammond defines the opportunity gap in this way: "the cumulative differences in access to key educational resources that support learning at home and at school, such as expert teachers, personalized attention, high-quality curriculum opportunities, good educational materials, and plentiful information resources." (Carter & Welner, p. 77, 2013). Wealthy districts often offer foreign languages early in elementary schools while poor districts offer few such courses even at the high school level; richer districts typically provide extensive music and art programs, project-based science, and elaborate technology supports, while poor districts often have none of these and often offer stripped down drill-and-practice approaches to reading and math rather than teaching for higher-order applications. The inequality rooted in such inequity, in addition to generational negligence, is compiled to create what Gloria Ladson-Billings refers to as educational debt, which

is steadily compounding and owed to those who have been denied access to quality education for hundreds of years (Carter & Welner, 2013).

Recommendations

Solutions to the problem of residential racial segregation are not hard to identify. What has been difficult is the process of finding government officials who combine the power, vision, and courage to implement the following necessary remedies: One, Congress should add 100,000 new Housing Choice Vouchers, targeted to very low-income minority families with children who will move from high poverty neighborhoods to neighborhoods that have comparatively little poverty, good public schools, and a substantial percentage of white residents. Congress should require that before any currently occupied public or federally assisted housing unit is demolished or otherwise removed from the low-rent stock (regardless whether demolition or disposition already has been authorized or displacement proceedings begun and regardless of the status of the occupants), the occupants must be provided with decent and affordable replacement housing that is adequate in size and located (with respect to educational, employment, and other resources) in a neighborhood desired by the occupants after the occupants have had an opportunity to receive effective mobility counseling.

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POLICY BRIEF

From Homeless and Helpless to Housed and Hopeful

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Introduction

According to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (2017), there were 553,742 people experiencing homelessness on a single night in 2017. Although the number of families with children experiencing homelessness decreased by five percent between 2016 and 2017, this group constitutes 33 percent of the homeless population (United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2017). More than 1.3 million homeless children and youth were enrolled in public schools during the 2013-2014 school year (United States Department of Education, 2016). Based on these data, it is evident that homelessness among school-age youth is a problem. This policy brief examines the policy enacted to ensure removal of barriers that could prevent this population of students from having access to the same educational resources as their housed peers. It also explores measures that can be taken to support all families faced with homelessness.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

Defining homelessness is not as simplistic as one might think; the definition is slightly varied across

federal agencies. It was under the McKinney-Vento Act that the United States Department of Education defined homelessness of children and youth; if a child does not have “a stable, consistent place to stay at night,” they are considered homeless (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2009, para. 2). The first - and only, to date - major federal legislative response to homelessness is the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2006).

The Reagan Administration, in the early 1980s, perceived homelessness as a predicament that did not necessitate federal intervention and the initial responses to the dilemma were primarily local. It was not until 1983 that the first federal task force on homelessness was formed, but neither programmatic or policy actions were confronted; the force was commissioned to provide information on the means to secure surplus federal property. It was through advocacy that homelessness become recognized as “a national problem requiring a national response,” resulting in the introduction of the Homeless Persons’ Survival Act to Congress in 1986. It was not until 1987, resulting from “an intensive

advocacy campaign,” that what ultimately became known as the McKinney-Vento Act passed legislation (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2006, pp. 3-4).

Recommendations

When there is more month at the end the money and the cost of housing continues to increase, so does the likelihood that a low-income family can end up facing homelessness. Students whose families are experiencing homelessness can benefit from having some consistency in their lives when possible. This consistency may exist only in an educational setting for the affected children. I offer the following recommendations to prevent other families from having a similar experience to that of my own.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, a United States Department of Housing and Urban Development administered program, is only appropriated at \$65 million to ensure equal access to education for homeless youth, including transportation to and from school. Given that public education supports over 1 million homeless youth per year, this works out to less than \$65 per youth per year (National Network for Youth).



What kind of support can we provide to anyone, not to mention this vulnerable population, on less than \$65 per year? How, then can we say that we are ensuring equal access to education for homeless youth? It is a known fact that we invest financially in those areas in which we see value. By investing more government dollars into this program, the likelihood that these children will be absent from school or move from school to school (high mobility) throughout the year due to transportation challenges significantly decreases. By removing this obstacle, we create an opportunity for this population of students to succeed at higher rates than have previously been observed.

Former U.S. Secretary of Education John B. King, Jr. had this to say, “As a kid, home was a scary and unpredictable place for me and I moved around a lot after my parents passed away. I know from my own and from my conversations with homeless students that school can save lives” (United States Department of Education, 2016).

The gamut of challenges that led to these families experiencing homelessness must be addressed if the family is to gain secure housing. Helping a family fill out a Food and Nutrition Application, or simply informing them that the program exists and where to go for assistance, can mean the difference between that family having food on the table or wondering where the next meal will come from. Providing a clothing closet at school or knowing where free clothing distribution centers are located within the community - the difference between a family having a variety of clothing items to choose from or wearing the same outfit, or two, every day. Knowing how to contact local shelters or churches to inquire about the availability of a bed or room can keep a family from sleeping in their car, or worse, on the street. Schools should have this information readily available and should be distributing it throughout the school year to all students.

There is a difference between experiencing homelessness and being permanently homeless. Families

experiencing homelessness have a strong desire to find stable housing. By establishing new programs and restructuring programs already in existence, living situations can improve for many, if not all, of the families. These programs should seek to help parents develop marketable skills to increase their chances of finding desirable employment. Providing each family with a case manager would be beneficial in helping families establish a plan of action taking them from homeless to housed; from financially insecure to financially independent, while keeping them accountable throughout the process. In addition to a case manager, these families could benefit from having a parent liaison to educate them on how they can best support their child to guarantee academic achievement in spite of their circumstances.

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POLICY BRIEF

Physical Literacy to Enhance Cognitive Development of Urban Learners

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Introduction

Research by Sibley and Etnier (2003) has proven that there is a measureable and discernable correlation between cognitive development and physical activity in children. This study affirmed that physical activity has a positive association with cognition.

Dance education has the same effect as physical education but has more flexibility, potentially engaging students that are not particularly athletic, as well as offering the possibilities of personal expression and freedom of movement quality and choice only found in the creative arts. According to Basch (2011) “Physical inactivity is highly and disproportionately prevalent among school-aged urban minority youth. (p. 626). Students of color laboring beneath burdens of language and economic disparities also suffer from the consequences of the sedentary lifestyle that is usually the result of urban living. Urban living is constrained by specific high density land use mixed with street connectivity, thus resulting in limited opportunities for physical activity. Introducing physical literacy into the urban educational environment has the potential to mitigate these factors.

Existing Policy and Practice

After extensive research, I have not found a national policy regarding physical literacy in the United States. There have been a number of studies resulting in policies on physical literacy throughout Europe, the British Virgin Islands, Canada, as well as Singapore and Hong Kong. However, in the United States interest on physical literacy has just begun to develop. The Society of Health, and Physical Educators (SHAPE), the leading organization for educators in dance and physical education in the United States, defined physical literacy in 2015, as it applies to sports and recreation. It has yet to formally address the connection of physical literacy and the dance education curriculum. The U.S. Department of Education has no definitive statement on the connection of physical literacy and cognition, so there is a wide span of involvement from state to state. It would take an inclusion in the national educational standards to codify such a policy. It is to be hoped that SHAPE will correct this discrepancy in the near future.

Summary and Implications

Basch (2011) stated that only a small percentage of students in high school participate in competitive sports activity. Physical activity affects metabolism and all major body systems, exerting powerful positive influences on the

brain and spinal cord and, consequently, on emotional stability, physical health, and motivation and ability to learn (pg. 626). Therefore it should not be a surprise to learn that urban high school learners of color have the highest numbers of obesity in the United States with non-Hispanic females at 22%, non-Hispanic Black males at 18%, Hispanic females at 20%, and Hispanic males at 22% (Ogden, 2015). Dance education provides a wider scope for introducing physical literacy to a population in need to increase cognitive development.

The dance education curriculum has the flexibility and breadth to engage multicultural students on many levels. Since dance is a strong factor in most cultures, optimizing this connection to encourage physical literacy and its benefits within the urban educational environment is only logical. Once physical literacy is activated and the cultural connections made, the cognitive skills are frequently transferred to the other academic areas. It is imperative that dance education be an integral part of the urban high school core curriculum.



According to the Centers for Disease Control (2007) 42% of black high school learners and 35% of Hispanic high school learners did not participate in any form of physical literacy. This means they did not participate in 60 or more minutes of any kind of physical activity that increased their heart rate and made them breathe hard some of the time on at least 1 day during the 7 days before the survey (Centers for Disease Control 2007). Dance education provides a wider scope for introducing physical literacy to a population in need of every advantage to increase cognitive development.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

The dance education curriculum has the flexibility and breadth to engage multicultural students with few limitations. The inclusion of a culturally relevant dance education curriculum, for example, an amalgam of hip hop dance with modern dance to design a creative vocabulary would have the potential for engaging students within a familiar medium. Dance education has the advantage of adapting itself to its current student population while engaging the student in cognitive

activity in conceptual retention, problem solving, increased motor skills linked to spatial awareness which also facilitates cognitive function. Wolfman and Bates (2005) have stated that 45% of the student population can now be classified as kinesthetic learners (pg. 7). Physical Literacy, through dance education has the ability to effectively activate kinesthetic learners' cognitive processes.

Recommendations

Dance education is extremely effective as a conduit for physical literacy and should be given the same weight as other core curriculum subjects. Every urban high school should offer dance education as an academic subject, not just a disposable elective selection. It is imperative that dance education be an integral part of the high school core curriculum especially in the urban educational environment. At present, it is imperative to start from the bottom up. Administrators have tremendous leeway in shaping the academic landscape of their schools. The primary goal must be to reinforce educating the total student, body as

well as mind. This position, once strong in the past, has presently fallen out of favor with the ascendance of test scores as an educational priority. Given the importance of physical literacy in student educational development, it would be logical to convince principals and administrators to commit to the inclusion of dance education on a consistent basis as a method of educating the physical literacy of the student. Once this attitudinal shift has been made, the next step would be to interact with state legislators to define the need for physical literacy within the standard curriculum, and the efficacy of dance education in its implementation. Once this policy has been implemented state wide, a consistency of instruction can be achieved.

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POLICY BRIEF

The Cost of Inequity: The Gifted Gap and Charlotte Mecklenburg

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Introduction

“The United States wastes an enormous amount of its human capital by failing to cultivate the innate talents of many of its young people... This failure exacts a great cost from the nation’s economy, widens painful gaps in income, [and] frustrates efforts to spur upward mobility.” (Yaluma & Tyner, 2018). According to economists, Charlotte, North Carolina ranks 50th out of 50 metropolitan regions in economic mobility (Chetty, Hendren, Kline, & Saez, 2014). Access to educational opportunity is a critical factor determining economic and social mobility (Farinde, Adams & Lewis, 2014). This report explores the Gifted Gap in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS), through data disaggregated by socio-economic status (SES) and race. Comparisons are drawn to gifted education enrollment disproportionality at the national and state level and strategies to address inequities are presented.

Background

An national analysis of gifted and talented (GT) programs at low and high poverty schools indicates that although gifted education services are available in schools across the SES spectrum, identification and enrollment in GT programs is disproportional (Yaluma & Tyner, 2018). The under-identification of gifted Black students, a phenomenon that persists even when achievement scores across groups are equivalent, is documented extensively in research literature (Ford, 1995; Ford, 2011; Goings & Ford, 2018; Grissom & Redding, 2016; McBee, 2010; Moore, Ford & Milner, 2005;

Wright, Ford & Young, 2017). Studies addressing the intersection of race, poverty and gifted education access are emerging (Goings & Ford, 2018; Yaluma & Tyner, 2018).

The importance of equitable identification for GT programs cannot be underestimated. Participation in GT programs has a positive impact on student performance, motivation, self-efficacy, engagement, self-concept and enrollment in Honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses (Darity & Jolla, 2009; Grissom & Redding, 2016). The opportunity to take AP courses in high school in positively correlated with college admission, coursework and completion (Scott, Tolson, & Lee, 2010; Flores, Park & Baker, 2017). Individuals awarded a college degree earn an average of \$1.6 million dollars more than persons with a high school diploma, subsequently, college completion is a key factor in economic mobility (Flores et al., 2017).

Findings

The Gifted Gap is defined as the difference in the percentage of students at low and high poverty schools enrolled in gifted education programs (Figure 1). A recent Fordham Foundation Report determined this gap to be 6% nationally and 12.3% in North Carolina (Yaluma & Tyner, 2018). Using the same methodology and data for the 2013-2014 school year available on the Office of Civil Rights website, the Gifted Gap in CMS schools was calculated to be 13.4% (United States Department of Education, 2018). The percent of students attending high poverty

schools in CMS who are enrolled in gifted education programs is four-fold lower than the state average (Figure 1). Disproportional access to gifted education services exist between groups within schools as well as between student populations at low and high poverty schools. These gaps are especially evident at low poverty schools.

At the district level, the disproportionality in Black and Latinx student access to GT services is evident. Wright, Ford and Young (2017) advocate the use of Relative Difference in Composition Indices (RDCI) and Equity Allowance Goals to highlight the extent of discriminatory policies and practices and provide stakeholders with metrics and goal-setting opportunities (Table 1). RDCI, the percentage of underrepresentation, reflects the difference for a group between the percent of students participating in GT programs and the percent of students of the same group in the general population (Wright et al., 2017). Participation rates below the Equity Allowance Goal indicate exclusion from gifted programs that is outside of the realm of chance and therefore reflective of discriminatory policies or practices (Wright et al.,

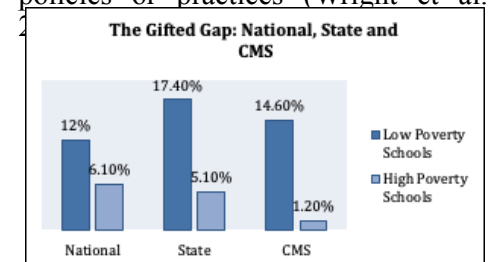


Figure 1. Comparison of National, State and CMS student enrollment in gifted programs at low poverty (< 25% Free and Reduced-price Lunch (FRPL) participation) and high poverty schools (>75% FRPL).



Implications

Approximately 2,200 promising, talented students are missing from the gifted education programs in CMS elementary and middle schools. While 973 Black students were identified as gifted during the 2013-2014 school year, that number would rise to 2,400 if the Equity Allowance Goal were met for this subgroup, resulting in GT services being available to an additional 1,400 students. In a similar manner, meeting the Equity Allowance goal for Latinx students would result in an additional 800 students receiving GT services.

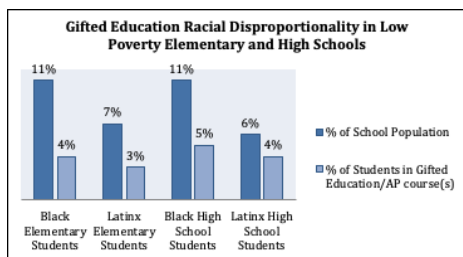


Figure 2. The ratio of total black and Latinx enrollment compared with the percent of black and Latinx students receiving GT services (elementary) or enrolled in 1 AP course (high school).

Recommendations

- Disaggregate GT and AP course enrollment data by race and SES at the school and district level and establish Equity Allowance Goals. Require School Improvement Teams and district leaders to prepare a “Closing the Gifted Gap” report to be reviewed by the CMS Board of Education annually. Encourage teacher leaders, counselors and administrators at schools that are achieving equity in gifted education access to share best practices with other practitioners.

- Evaluate identification and testing methods to ensure measures are being used that identify students who may not have high scores on Euro-centric assessments of intelligence and academic ability.

- Provide Professional Development to specifically address disproportionality in gifted education identification and support. Include opportunities for teachers to learn about varied definitions of giftedness, explore implicit biases and consider what giftedness might look like in students whose racial, ethnic or linguistic identity differs from their own. Encourage teachers to use creative inter-disciplinary

pedagogies that expand learning opportunities for all students, especially those in low SES communities.

- Acknowledge the difference between “hallway integration” and educational equity. Schools within the mid-range of SES are especially vulnerable to giving the appearance of integration despite having Honors and AP level classes that are significantly segregated by race.

- Provide GT informational literature in diverse languages at churches and community centers that serve Black and Latinx students and families.

2013-2014	Percentage of Total CMS Enrollment	Participation in Gifted/ AP Programs	Percentage of Under-representation	Equity Allowance Goal
Elementary and Middle Schools				
Black	39.9%	13.0%	67.4%	31.9% (Increase from 13% to 31.9%)
Latinx	20.8%	5.7%	72.5%	16.6% (Increase from 5.7% to 16.6%)
High School Students Enrolled in 1 AP Course				
Black	44.4%	27.3%	38.5%	35.5% (Increase from 27.3% to 35.5%)
Latinx	16.0%	11.1%	30.6%	12.8% (Increase from 11.1% to 12.8%)

Table 1. Percentage of Under-representation (RDCI) calculated using the formula: $100 - (\% \text{ participating in Gifted Programs} / \% \text{ of Total CMS Enrollment})$. Equity Allowance Goal calculated using the formula: $\text{Equity Allowance Goal} = \% \text{ of Total Enrollment} - (\% \text{ of Total Enrollment} * 20\%)$

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POLICY BRIEF

Racial Equity Implications of North Carolina's ESSA Plan

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Introduction

In North Carolina, just as in schools all over the nation, the race of a student has a great influence on the quality of education received (U.S. Department of Education, 2016; Public School Forum of North Carolina, 2016). In addition to other subgroup data, the racial/ethnic identity of a student correlates with many different academic outcomes. African American and Latino students, are increasingly more likely than white students to attend schools that are “double-segregated” – majority students of color and also high-poverty (Frankenburg, Siegel-Hawley, Ee & Orfield, 2017; Gilbert, 2013). Two-thirds are charter schools in North Carolina are considered “racially-identifiable” (Ladd, Clotfelter & Holbein, 2015). White and Asian students are significantly more likely to be referred to Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AIG) than their Black and Latino peers (Public School Forum of North Carolina, 2016). Black students are singularly overrepresented in special education. In general, students of color experience exclusionary discipline at several times the rate of white students (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2017). Consequently, gaps in achievement are racially demarcated when looking at NAEP exams and other benchmark assessments.

Opportunity Gap for Students of Color

Racial disparities in achievement often begin outside of the classroom, but manifest themselves academically. A pattern of residential segregation and racial wealth gaps place students of color at a social and economic disadvantage (Chetty, Hendren, Kline, & Saez, 2014; Asante-Muhammad, Collins, Hoxie & Nieves, 2016). Schools often do not adequately respond to the cultural needs of students of color and can be places that reproduce systemic inequality (Allen, 2014). Research shows that teachers often have lowered expectations for students of color (Gershenson, Holt, & Papageorge, 2015), interpret their behaviors as more disruptive (Bates & Glick, 2013), and fail to enroll them in rigorous courses even when they exhibit potential (Neff, Helms & Raynor, 2017). Instructional approaches reflect white, middle class norms and not culturally or linguistically diverse populations (Allen, 2014). Traditional education attainment indicators do not account for non-academic factors such as these. There are several system-level factors such as policies, school climate, and practices at play that have the potential to influence these outcomes (Johnson & La Salle, 2010). These other data tell a more nuanced story about the experience of students of color.

ESSA and the Fifth Indicator

The original Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was an equity-based reform, created to respond to the needs of disadvantaged subgroups (Jennings, 2012). It's successor No Child Left Behind (NCLB) sought to create accountability for achievement of these subgroups, but relied too heavily on narrow, high-stakes measures like tests. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), signed in 2015, allows states to develop accountability systems for student performance. The legislation offers greater flexibility than NCLB, but requires four academic indicators: math and reading proficiency, graduation rates for high school, student growth or another indicator for elementary and middle grades, English language proficiency, and fifth non-academic indicator (American Federation of Teachers). It is suggested that states' non-academic factor measure “school quality or student success”. This could include things such as student engagement, school climate and safety, access to advanced course, etc.

North Carolina has submitted it's original plan, and after receiving feedback from the U.S. Department of Education, resubmitted the plan on February 8th, 2018. Whereas education advocates acknowledge ESSA as a potential opportunity for states to ensure equity (Cook-Harvey, Darling-Hammond, Lam, Mercer &



2017). There are 34 states that chose chronic absenteeism – as it is seen as more reflective of child well-being and school environment.

School Performance Grades

North Carolina opted to use growth, measured by the Educational Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS). This value-added measure determines whether a school ‘did not meet’, ‘met’, or ‘exceeded growth’ in select subject areas (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Using a formula of achievement on benchmark assessments (80%) and school growth (20%), a composite score is given in the form of a School Performance Grade (A-F). A weighing system skewed so heavily in favor of achievement over growth, has resulted in School Performance Grades very strongly correlated to school demographics (Ableidinger, 2015).

The grading system has been in use since its implementation in the 2013-14 school year. However, according to the North Carolina ESSA plan, in addition to the overall School Performance Grade, “all identified subgroups will be designated an A, B, C, D, or F as determined by this model (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). This means students of color could conceivably receive a failing grade, even while attending a school with a favorable rating. While the

disaggregation of outcomes by subgroup is essential for achieving exposing racial disparities and creating equity, it still provides an incomplete picture of the problem (Noguera and Wing, 2006).

Recommendations

In order to capture the nuance and other lurking variables at work, a performance grade for subgroups seems insufficient. There are a host of other factors that converge, particularly for students of color that simply will not be made evident via a composite score measuring achievement and growth. To capture these other data, and truly make a case for racial equity, other non-academic factors should be measured as part of the ESSA plan. The following are recommendations:

A school climate, “reflects students’, school personnel’s, and parents’ experiences of school life socially, emotionally, civically, ethically as well as academically” (Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & D’Alessandro, 2013, p.369). In the interest of determining the ways race is relevant to the schooling experience, measuring this school climate according the racial dynamics would be particularly useful. Subgroup performance grades could be triangulated by student, staff, and parent surveys designed to gauge the

level racial and cultural responsiveness at a school.

The vast majority of states incorporated chronic absenteeism because it correlates with so many other school factors. It operates much like a lagging indicator of what is happening both with the students and school environment. Additionally, it is a risk-factor in a myriad of other things associated with student success. Paying attention to this seems necessary for getting a more well-rounded understanding student achievement.

Lastly, the racial and ethnic composition of schools. As previously stated, North Carolina schools are segregating by race and income. Consequently, the schools with high concentrations of poverty are also more likely to be filled with African American, Latino, and Native students. The density of students of color had a significant bearing on a school’s probability of being labeled as failing under NCLB (Sims, 2012). Utilizing these non-academic factors would provide a more precise metric for the state of racial equity under ESSA, and help to better delineate root causes that inform remedies.

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POLICY BRIEF

Is Impact of Government Regulations on Small Sector Non-profit Organizations

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Introduction

Over the past twenty years, the non-profit sector has experienced significant growth with the number of registered nonprofit organizations reaching 1.4 million in 2013. According to the National Center on Charitable Statistics (2015), these entities reported \$1.74 trillion in revenue and \$1.63 trillion in expenses. In 2010, the bulk of the sector was comprised of smaller nonprofit groups, those with gross revenue of less than \$25,000 (Roeger, 2010). This growth has been fueled by several factors including challenging economic times, especially those sparked by the 2008 recession, along with shifts in governmental focus and support for social services (Salamon, 2012). As the volume of individuals being serviced by various not-for-profit organizations continues to grow, so has the need for effective leadership and accountability, especially in the wake of numerous fraudulent scandals and reports of fiduciary shortcomings (Fishman, 2010). Given the significant impact community, as seen through the works of local nonprofit organizations, can have on education and achievement, it is important that policy makers have concrete regulations on the establishment and oversight of these entities without adding to their cost structure.

Establishment Clause

The nonprofit sector is one that is multifaceted. The sector is comprised of varying types of nonprofit organizations with missions that range from local needs to extensive global concerns. Regardless of size, these organizations are accountable to multiple stakeholders which makes regulating these entities challenging. The regulatory environment for which nonprofit organizations function has seen significant changes both in how organizations obtain such status and in how these organizations must report their operations to state and federal governmental entities. Yet, as Fishman (2010) explains, the process of governance for the sector is “murky” with state government having control of some activities while the Internal Revenue monitors reporting.

The first challenge is in defining a nonprofit organization and determining who should register as such. Casey (2016) defines a nonprofit organization as having “some structure and regularity to its operations, including defined goals and activities, *whether or not* they are formally constituted or legally registered” (p. 23). Most nonprofit organizations register with their respective state and seek Section 501(c) 3 status through the Internal Revenue Service (Salaman, 2012). The cost of filing ranges between \$275 to \$600 depending on the

revenue of the organization (IRS.gov). This distinction provides benefits including tax exemption and credibility to potential funding sources. According to Fishman (2010) registration requires the completion of Form 1023 but the process lacks critical details regarding governance. Moreover, by definition, there is a subset of organizations that assume the duties of a nonprofit organization in function, serving the greater good without the governmental oversight. These organizations still can solicit funding from the citizenry.

Reporting Clause

The other part of nonprofit regulatory oversight is in the reporting to the IRS. The Pension Protection Act of 2006 requires that all tax-exempt organizations file either a Form 990 or a 990-N to the IRS annually (Roeger, 2010). Organizations with gross receipts under \$50,000 can complete an ecard that addresses marginal information on the organization and excludes specific data on financial support. Organizations over the \$50,000 must report their receipts by completing the more cumbersome 990s.



Many organizations solicit the local accountants in their areas to assist with the completion of the form. For some, this added cost could be substantial to their budgets. Moreover, Volz et al (2011) explain that the new reporting encompasses 12 pages and additional supplemental information that may shine a negative light on the organization if they are not completed with detail since several narratives are requested in hopes of making governance, programs, and management transparent. In fact, Harris et al (2015) conducted a study to determine if donors have placed value on the new 990 reporting when evaluating organizational governance. The study showed a positive correlation between donations and governmental grants based on seven tested governance factors, providing incentive for organizations to not only file their 990s but to be specific and forthcoming in the associated narratives.

Implications / Recommendations

Small, grassroots organizations focusing on human services comprise 26% of the small, nonprofit sector (Roeger, 2010). These groups have invested in being an extension of community to youth, families, the elderly, and others in

need of support. As their role expands with increased need, so must their accountability and oversight. Salamon (2012) identified six components that must exist for organizations to be accountable to constituents: (1) There must be a rule, law, regulation, internally sanctioned procedure, or organizational policy that is accepted by all stakeholders as valid and legitimate standard of performance; (2) There must be some type of overseeing authority that is recognized by all stakeholders as legitimate and qualified to judge compliance or performance relative to the standard; (3) The oversight body must itself have sufficient internal capacity, including resources and management expertise, to effectively and fairly monitor compliance; (4) All stakeholders must embrace the oversight system that accurately tracks compliance or performance relative to the standard as well as reporting procedures that capture the relevant information and convey it in a timely manner to the overseeing authority; (5) There should be appropriate sanctions for noncompliance and rewards for compliance; (6) Ideally there should be a feedback loop that gives organizations the opportunity to learn from their mistakes and to improve

their future performance. With these standards in mind, policy makers should consider the following recommendations: Identify one primary oversight agency specifically concentrated on the Nonprofit Sector. This entity would insure that the “murky” system has clearly defined standards and guidance for small and large organizations. Mandate all organizations soliciting funds to register as a nonprofit organization, regardless of gross receipts. The work of these agencies requires a responsibility to the community and going through the registration process validates a desire to have a lasting presence. (Salamon, 2012). Modify electronic filing for small nonprofits to include additional on funding streams. This provides the community with a better understanding of the organization’s sustainability. (Roeger, 2010). For organizations completing the longer 99 Forms, provide technical training workshops on how to complete the form and consider cost reductions for filing. This will alleviate cost burdens on the sector while also reassuring stakeholders that the organization is operating within regulatory standards.

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POLICY BRIEF

N Debunking the Myth of Impartiality: North Carolina's School Grading System

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Introduction

In 2002 the NCLB was passed (Darling-Hammond, 2010). It was an era that emphasized high-stakes testing as a means of school evaluation that could result in state sanction interventions and possibly school closure (Lee, 2015). It was repealed under the Obama Administration and re-authorized as the ESSA. It was championed as an act that was supposed to be a step away from high-stakes testing, and it was intended to give power back to the states to maintain accountability within public education (Korte, 2015). However, the ESSA's emphasis on redistributing control for schooling back to the states with less oversight by the federal government has not resulted in lower stakes testing in North Carolina (Wagner, 2015). North Carolina issues each school a grade based on standardized test scores for accountability, which is similar to the NCLB (North Carolina Board of Education, 2018; Wagner 2015). According to the latest North Carolina Board of Education's (NCBE) *Consolidated Plan*, schools are evaluated based on a weighted formula of evaluation (2018). This weighted formula of assessment is determined by 80 percent standardized test scores and by 20 percent school progress which is defined by Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS; Public Schools First NC, 2017). In addition, the NCBE mandates that schools report to the parents of their students the school's grade.

Primary and Subsequent Issues

Students of a low SES are disproportionately affected by this policy because they typically do not do well on standardized tests (Au, 2008). In North Carolina the schools graded as a D or an F make up about 93 percent of the schools are *Title I* schools, in other words about 93 percent of the schools are high poverty schools (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2017). According to the

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI). Just over 1:3 high poverty schools have either a D or F rating. Nearly 1:2 high poverty school are the graded out as C school (NCDPI, 2017). 83 percent of high poverty schools receive a grade as a C or below (NCDPI, 2017). 16 percent or less than 2:10 high poverty schools are assigned a grade of B or higher (NCDPI, 2017).

There are compounding results that follow schools receiving poor grades. Highly qualified teachers are less inclined to want to teach in a low performing school because they are evaluated as an instructor based on their students' performance on standardized tests and through the EVAAS (Hewitt, 2015; Lewis, 2017; Public Schools First NC, 2017). Schools will be stigmatized because they must publicize their grade. The middle class and affluent Parents will not want to send their children to a school that is low performing and results in a further re-segregation of schools (Au, 2017). Property value is determined by school performance because people typically do not want to buy houses near low performing schools (Hodge, et al., 2017). This current policy in conjunction with Betsy Devos' education budget that promotes school choice and has placed additional federal funding towards it through the F.O.C.U.S grant threatens to further harm high-poverty schools (Department of Education, 2017). If students begin to leave and go to higher performing schools less money will be taken from the high-poverty school that is labeled low performing school and more money will be given to the school labeled high performing.

Standardized testing is not a fool-proof metric of evaluation because the results are not favorable for Black, Latinx, and financially impoverished students (Au, 2008). Traditionally these groups have not tested well on these tests because of the inherent bias of the test. In a school district in California, an affluent school and a *Title I*

school took a math test that the teachers between the schools collaborated to create. The *Title I* school did better than the more affluent school, but on the standardized tests, the students of the more affluent school scored higher (Boaler, 2003). Boaler (2003) argued that the wording of the math equations questions utilized vocabulary and words that the less affluent students were unfamiliar with causing the students to underperform on the test. The instrument that is being used to evaluate the quality of instruction is not a valid measurement of cognitive comprehension of the school material. It has resulted in teachers teaching students to pass the test and not developing critical thought processes to prepare their minds for College (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Whereas, their more affluent counterparts are receiving an education that is preparing them to matriculate through school and achieve a college education and enter the work-force (Glaser & Silver, 1994). Students in schools labeled as low performing are consequentially receiving a differentiated curriculum due to the policy placing too much power in a test to determine the quality of learning taking place and the value of a teacher.

English Language Learners (ELL) also disadvantaged by this policy since students are not given tests in their native tongue. ELL students often take a test that they do not understand. The exam is not an adequate metric of evaluation it does not reveal the students understanding of the content knowledge. Instead, it exposes that the current system is not putting forth a system sufficient to test and prepare ELL students. Due to the importance of the tests teachers have reverted to various measures to keep the students deemed the worst academic performers away from taking the test. Darling-Hammond (2010) pointed out that teachers and administrators prevented ELL students from taking tests and even suspended or expelled to keep students from lowering their test scores in Texas.



Recommendations

Policymakers must take into consideration the quality of the instruments that they use for evaluation. The North Carolina Department of education must use other devices beyond standardized tests to evaluate schools. Primarily due to the bias of the test that negatively impacts students of color, females students, and poor students (Au, 2008). It is impossible to create a test that is without bias, but probability increases of having a biased test if the test creators do not understand the social or academic context of the students for whom they are preparing the exam. I would recommend that each school district creates a committee of administrators, teachers, and curriculum specialist that consists of a broad racial and economic demographics of a school district and the committee will be in responsible for being equity evaluators in State schooling. There are three areas in which this committee will concentrate their collective efforts; equitable testing, school evaluations, and teacher training.

This committee will receive and review the tests created by the North Carolina Testing Program. After the evaluations are submitted, and recommendations are made the test makers must resubmit the sample test to ensure that the test is equitable. Each district receives five voting representatives of those five voters three of them must come from high poverty schools. For non-English or limited English speaking students a translator(s) will be contracted to translate the questions. Funding for this process will come out of *Title I* and *Title III* funds.

In addition, standardized testing will not be the only means by which teachers and schools are evaluated. This

committee will also collaborate with the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) that will provide evaluations based on suspension data and by doing walkthroughs through the 200 schools a year with the most disproportionate discipline rates for Black and Latinx students. The OCR would present the findings via hard copy and the related field notes from the schools' equity assessments and suggest a plan to address the lack of equity. After they receive the hard copy, the OCR should send a representative down to answer possible questions.

Teachers would be evaluated based on their rate of suspension as well as how well their students perform in their classes over a five-year trend. In other words, if they suspend higher than the standard rate for the district, then they need receive hands-on professional development training. If many of their kids are lagging behind a content specialist should come in and evaluate her classroom and give the teacher individual coaching.

Finally, the state will grade the school in a new fashion 40 percent will be based on school's equity determined by their teachers 50 percent will be based on the teacher evaluations defined by the criteria stated earlier. 40 percent will be based on standardized test scores. 20 percent will be based on EVAAS evaluation. This new grading formula will cause a teacher to be less concerned with teaching to the test and finding ways to removing students before the test. Hopefully, it will cause teachers to find ways to understand students that can be difficult and learn to work with them.

Next Steps

The Mecklenburg County School District must employ the services of a

curriculum specialist that has an in-depth understanding of a culturally sustaining pedagogy. They will be employed to examine the schools' curriculum from a theoretical standpoint, but also from a pragmatic perspective by observing the teachers in action. While this yearlong investigation is underway the investigator will also evaluate student academic outcomes. The curriculum specialists will determine the students' engagement with the instructor and with the content knowledge. If the grades that result in the classes are unfavorable towards the minority students, the findings will be shared with the state.

The findings will justify the need to make the questions more understandable for the students that take the test. It is impossible for test makers to make the test equitable across the board without the assistance of educator across the state because within one state there exists a diverse amount of cultures and sub-cultures. Historically, these standardized exams disenfranchise black, brown, low SES, and poor students. Thus, it is imperative that these marginalized students be able to understand the questions on the exam to ensure that the test takers understand the language of the questions. Policymakers and schools cannot make adequate evaluations about their students if the tests remain inequitable.

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