Housing Policy Is School Policy: Socioeconomic Integration as an Educational Reform Strategy

Looking Back, Moving Forward:
A Conference on Race, Class, Opportunity and School Boundaries in the Richmond Region

The University of Richmond

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Housing Strategies

- **Gautreaux Program** (Chicago). Lottery winners 4 times less likely to drop out of high school (5% vs. 20%) and twice as likely to attend college (54% vs. 20%) as lottery losers.

- **Federal Moving to Opportunity Program**. Few achievement gains but a poor test: control group (73.9% subsidized lunch) vs. treatment group (67.5% subsidized lunch) in schools attended.

- **Local Inclusionary Zoning Programs** – e.g. Montgomery County, MD.
RAND researcher Heather Schwartz tests the effectiveness to two strategies: extra resources (class size reduction, professional development, extended learning time) in high poverty “red zone” schools ($2,000 more/pupil) vs. “inclusionary housing” policy that allows low-income students to attend low poverty “green zone” schools with fewer resources.

Examined 858 children randomly assigned to public housing units scattered throughout Montgomery County and enrolled in Montgomery County public elementary schools 2001-2007.
Public Housing Students in Green Zone Schools Outperformed Those in Red Zone Schools

Montgomery County Study

- Low-income public housing students in low poverty schools performed at .4 of a standard deviation better in math than low-income public housing students in higher poverty schools with more resources.

- Low-income students in green zone schools cut their large initial math gap with middle-class students in half. The reading gap was cut by one-third.

- Most of the effect (2/3) was due to attending low-poverty schools, and some (1/3) due to living in low-poverty neighborhoods.
Classmate Characteristics, by School or Student SES

- **Teacher Disrespect**
  - High-Poverty: 22.9\(^a\)
  - Low-Poverty: 9.2\(^a\)

- **Mobility**
  - High-Poverty: 60\(^b\)
  - Low-Poverty: 30\(^b\)

- **Peer Vocabulary**
  - High-Poverty: 1116\(^c\)
  - Low-Poverty: 525\(^c\)

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\(a\) Percentage of schools reporting student acts of disrespect for teachers in classrooms at least once per week. High-poverty refers to schools with 50 percent or more of their students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch; and low-poverty refers to schools with 20\% or less of their students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

\(b\) Percentage of students who have attended two or more schools between first and third grades. High-poverty refers to the study’s lowest family income group (family income is less than $10,000). Low-poverty refers to the study’s highest family income group (family income is $50,000 or more).

\(c\) Number of words in student’s vocabulary by 36 months of age. High-poverty means child is part of a family receiving welfare, and low-poverty means child is part of a professional family.

Parental Involvement, by Student SES

Teaching Quality, by School SES

Salary Increase Needed to Counteract Turnover Effects Caused by Differences in Student Characteristics Between Large Urban and Suburban Districts, by Experience Class of Teacher (for Female, Nonminority Teachers)

Parallel Schools Strategy: Socioeconomic Integration

- 80 U.S. Districts, educating 4 million students, using socioeconomic status as a factor in student assignment.

Examples:

- Cambridge, MA. All schools should fall within ± 10 percentage points of district average for free and reduced price lunch (40%).

- Chicago, IL. 85% low-income so begin by integrating a subset of magnet and selective schools, with the goal of integrating more as middle-class return.
40 Years of Research

- 1966 Coleman Report: SES of family the biggest predictor of achievement; SES of school the second biggest predictor.

- 2006 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) for 15 year olds in science showed a “clear advantage in attending a school whose students are, on average, from more advantaged socioeconomic backgrounds.” Finland least economically segregated

- 2006 Douglas Harris CAP study: Math data from 18 million students found minority students have greater gains in racially integrated schools and that “a substantial portion of the ‘racial composition’ effect is really due to poverty and peer achievement.”
Percentage of Schools That are Persistently High-Performing, by SES

Note: High-poverty is defined as at least 50 percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch; low-poverty is defined as fewer than 50 percent eligible. High-performing is defined as being in the top third in the state in two subjects, in two grades, and over a two-year period. Source: Douglas N. Harris, “Ending the Blame Game on Educational Inequity: A study of ’High Flying’ Schools and NCLB,” Educational Policy Studies Laboratory, Arizona State University, March 2006, p. 20.
Poverty Concentrations and Achievement

National Assessment of Educational Progress 2011, Fourth Grade Math Results

Socioeconomic Integration
Effect on Middle-Class Students

- **Numbers Matter.** Numerical majority sets the tone.

- **Middle-Class children on average are less sensitive to changes in school environment than low-income students.**

- **Social and moral benefits of diversity**
Concluding Thoughts

- Poor kids can learn, if given the right environment.
- 95% of education reform about making separate but equal work rather than reducing the number of high poverty schools.
- Housing policy and school policy can serve as complementary strategies.
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