

# The Civil Rights Project



*Proyecto Derechos Civiles*

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## ***DECADES OF INACTION LEAD TO WORST SEGREGATION IN PA SCHOOLS IN TWO DECADES***

LOS ANGELES—A report released today by UCLA’s Civil Rights Project finds that segregation by race and poverty in Pennsylvania is worsening and that there has been little action in recent decades to address this harmful pattern. [\*Is Opportunity Knocking or Slipping Away? Racial Diversity and Segregation in Pennsylvania\*](#), co-authored by Stephen Kotok and Katherine Reed, finds that the amount of intensely segregated schools, where over 90% of students are minorities, have more than doubled in the past two decades. Further, a staggering 85% of all Pennsylvania students attending these intensely segregated schools are low income, showing the acute overlap between race and poverty, which we call double segregation. Documented by a half century of research showing systematic inequalities in segregated schools, this double segregation is threatening to the future of the state and its minority communities, in terms of both the most critical assets of schools, including experienced and highly qualified teachers, challenging curricula, and a strong academic peer group, and key results such as graduation rates, achievement levels and success in college.

Using statewide public school enrollment data from 1989 to 2010, the report examines changes in school enrollment and segregation at the state-level as well across Pennsylvania’s two largest metropolitan areas –Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

The authors find increasing racial diversity statewide between 1989 and 2010, with a tripling of the Latino share of students, and a doubling of the share of Asian students statewide. The report shows that despite a seemingly growing diversity, Pennsylvania’s public schools remain severely segregated. Pennsylvania public school enrollment is much whiter compared to the neighboring states of New York and Delaware and to the national average.

The study also describes a history of desegregation efforts across the state, reviews evidence on the benefits of racial and socio-economic diversity in schools, and makes suggestions on how policy makers could take a more proactive approach in remedying this problem.

“The increased racial diversity in smaller districts across the state –due especially to an increase in Latino students—provides a real opportunity for policy makers to be proactive in ensuring schools are racially balanced, particularly since we are already seeing a few voluntary plans at the local level,” explains Co-author Stephen Kotok. “While curbing segregation by race and class presents a much greater challenge in metro areas, such as Philadelphia, there is a precedent in the state for more aggressive action.”

Due to housing segregation and a concentration of minority students in the state's urban areas, Pennsylvania has struggled historically to integrate its public schools. From the early 1960s to late 1990s, legal plans to desegregate schools were carried out at the state and local level. Although the success of these desegregation efforts varied, evidence documented the decrease in segregation. The last decade has, however, been marked by an almost complete retreat amongst policy makers from goals of racial diversity. The consequences of this retreat can be seen across the state, and especially in the Philadelphia Metropolitan Area, where almost 45% of all public schools are now majority minority, compared to 31% in 1989-1990, and around 31% of schools are intensely segregated, as compared to about 20% in 1989-1990.

## **OTHER KEY FINDINGS:**

### **Statewide**

- The white share of the public school population has decreased from 83% in 1989-1990 to 72% in 2010-2011, while the share of all non-white groups has increased.
- Since 1989-1990, the share of majority minority and intensely segregated schools has more than doubled to 21% and 11% respectively.
- In 2010-2011, the typical black student in Pennsylvania attended a school that was 30% white, and the average Latino student attended a school that was 39% white, though whites made up 72% of total public school enrollment. On the other hand, the typical white student attended a school that was 85% white.

### **Metro Philadelphia**

- The white share of Metro Philadelphia's public school enrollment decreased from 60% in 1989-1990 to 53% in 2010-2011, and the Latino share of enrollment increased from 4.8% to 9.3%.
- Majority minority schools represented 45% of Metro Philadelphia schools, intensely segregated schools represented 31%, and in 2010-2011, apartheid schools (where 99% to 100% of students are minorities) represented 17.1% of all Philadelphia metro schools.
- In 2010-2011, the typical black student in the metro attended a school with 18% white students and the typical Latino attended a school with 30% white students, while the typical white student attended a school that was 77% white.
- The typical black student in the Philadelphia metro attended a school with 71% low-income students and the typical Latino student attended a school with 66% low-income students, more than three times the share of low-income students in schools attended by the typical white student (21%).

### **Metro Pittsburgh**

- The Pittsburgh Metro Area has remained extremely white (82%) and enrolls an unusually low number of Latino students (0.9%) for a large metro area.
- In 2010-2011, the typical black student attended a school with 43% white students, even though white students made up 82% of the overall enrollment in the Pittsburgh metro area. The typical white student attended a school that was 89% white. Despite the potential for integration due to a high proportion of white students in the Pittsburgh metro, black students are still dramatically underexposed to their white peers.
- The share of low-income students in intensely segregated schools increased from 77% in 1999-2000 to 88% in 2010-2011.

The report provides multiple recommendations for creating and maintaining integrated schools, including developing student assignment policies that consider race among other factors, altering school choice plans to ensure they promote diversity, promoting collaboration between fair housing efforts and school policies, supporting communities experiencing racial change and resegregation, by helping them create voluntary desegregation plans, and recruiting a more diverse teaching staff while training current teachers and administrators. Following the example of New York, Pennsylvania could create a pilot program to support more socioeconomic integration within districts. Given the intense fragmentation of districts in Pennsylvania, particularly in the major metro areas, the report suggests that policy makers should consider district consolidation.

“Even though the topic of consolidation is a sensitive one, since there has not been a successful large-scale attempt at merging since the 1960s,” acknowledges Co-author Katherine Reed. “The state could create incentives through competitive grants that would ultimately save money and allow districts to diversity quality services, such as AP course offerings, ELL teachers, and magnet programs.”

The report is the tenth in a series of reports on school segregation trends along the East Coast and can be found [here](#).

"This important report calls attention to the double segregation experienced by Pennsylvania's black and Latino students - by race and economic class," says Harold Jordan of the Pennsylvania ACLU. "It makes an effective case that racially-isolated schools harm all children. Most importantly, it spells out practical measures that can be taken at the state and local levels to create healthy diverse and higher quality schools."

#### ***About the Civil Rights Project at UCLA***

*Founded in 1996 by former Harvard professors [Gary Orfield](#) and Christopher Edley, Jr., The Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles is now co-directed by Orfield and [Patricia Gándara](#), professors at UCLA. Its mission is to create a new generation of research in social science and law on the critical issues of civil rights and equal opportunity for racial and ethnic groups in the United States. It has commissioned more than 500 [studies](#), published more than 15 [books](#) and issued numerous reports from authors at universities and research centers across the country.*

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