NYC School Segregation Report Card
Still Last, Action Needed Now

Executive Summary

Eight years ago, in 2014, The Civil Rights Project issued a report that raised awareness about the dire state of segregation in New York State (NYS) and, in particular, New York City (NYC) schools. That report spurred substantial activism, primarily led by student groups, parents, teachers, and administrators, which has been influential in the current integration efforts underway in NYC.

This report serves as an update to the 2014 report on NYC segregation, which analyzed data up to 2010.[2] The analysis of recent data in this report reveals trends from 2010-2018 in school segregation at the state, city, borough, and community district level.

A number of findings resulted from the analysis. First, NYS retains its place as the most segregated state for black students, and second most segregated for Latino students (after California).[3] Segregation patterns have persisted since 2010, and attendance in segregated schools has intensified for black students. More black and Latino students are attending schools with high levels of poverty. We found great disparities in racial/ethnic isolation between charter and traditional public schools. Charter schools have proliferated since 2010 and these remain the most highly racially isolated schools. We found slight decreases in the share of charter schools that are intensely segregated since 2010, except for in Queens where there has been a sharp increase in the share of segregated charter schools. There is great variation among racial/ethnic isolation among city boroughs and community school districts. Black and Latino students experience the greatest isolation in the Bronx, and white and Asian students have the highest isolation on Staten Island. Three community school districts have experienced modest diversification in their school enrollment: District 2 in Manhattan, District15 in Brooklyn and District 31 in Staten Island.

Other specific findings include:

Demographic Shifts

At the state level, growing demographic changes in NYS that were outlined in 2010 persist. White students are no longer the state's majority group as they were in 2010 (just over 50% at that time), and Latino and Asian populations continue to increase. The ongoing national changes in population are clearly present in the state, which is experiencing overall declining enrollment: shrinking shares of white and black students and rising shares of Latino and Asian students.

[2] Kucsera, J., & Orfield, G. (2014). New York state's extreme school segregation: Inequality, inaction and a damaged future, (March), 155 p. Retrieved from http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/ny-norflet-report-placeholder.

[3] Based on highest shares of segregated schools and lowest exposure to White students.

With the growing population of nonwhite students, more students are attending diverse schools, but shares of predominantly nonwhite schools are increasing. If all schools were perfectly proportional in the city, all schools would be predominantly nonwhite; however, the share of intensely segregated schools (>90% students of color[4]) is increasing. On the other hand, there has been a steep decline in extremely segregated schools (>99% students of color), consistent with national trends. All racial/ethnic groups but Latino students have experienced declining contact with white students in NYS; this has been supplanted with growing exposure to Latino students. Black students have seen a 10 point increase in their contact with Latino students since 1990 (21% to 31%).

NYS has experienced declining poverty among children under 18, from 21% in 2010 to 19% in 2018. Poverty among white children is the lowest in the state (12%) and highest among black and Latino children (27-28%%). The poverty level for Latino children was 28% in 2018, a decline from the high and roughly stable share of 34% from 2010-2015.[5] Despite overall declines in poverty, dual segregation of race/ethnicity with low-income status has worsened over the past 10 years. The average black, Latino, and American Indian student attends schools with 78% low-income students, a sharp rise from 68% in 2010 (may be over-estimated due to free-reduced lunch data collection change, explained in the Data and Analysis section). In a highly multiracial state, it is important to realize that most schools combine significant shares of low-income and nonwhite students; issues that arise will need attention by those concerned with successful race relations. This data, of course, does not reflect the surge of poverty during the pandemic, which has disproportionately impacted families of color.

NYC has experienced large demographic shifts as well over the past 30 years. The largest change is the increase in the Latino population, from 35% in 1990 to 41% in 2018. This is the largest racial/ethnic group in the city's schools. The Asian proportion has also increased sharply, more than doubling in the same time frame (from 8% in 1990 to over 17% in 2018). Asian students now surpass the number of white students. Since, on average, Asian students attend strong schools, are high achieving, and fewer shares are low-income, the growth of Asian student enrollment has become an important factor in integration, race relations, and language policy. At the same time, there have been significant declines in the black student population; once the largest racial/ethnic group in the city with a 37% share of the population in 1990, it declined to 25% in 2018. For the first time in 30 years, white student enrollment has increased (14.5% to 15.1% from 2010-2018), potentially signaling a small beginning of their return to urban schools.

In NYC, an increasing trend in shares of schools with *intense* segregation (>90% nonwhite student enrollment) declined slightly from a high of 72% in 2010 to 70% in 2018. The share of *apartheid schools* (>99% nonwhite student enrollment) has been declining since 1990, but over the past 10 years, NYC saw an even steeper rate of decline than previous decades (31% to 17%). This could reflect the return of white families to historically nonwhite communities. Still, 94% (934,043) of students in NYC attend predominantly nonwhite schools and the share of these schools has been increasing for 30 years. Although overall shares of intensely segregated schools declined since 2010, attendance in segregated schools has intensified for black students, while

[4] Students of color include students of any nonwhite race/ethnicity.
[5] Children in poverty in New York State, 100% poverty threshold. Source: https://datacenter.kidscount.org.

white and Asian attendance in these schools has been relatively stable and much lower than that of underrepresented minority students.[6] Essentially *all* students of color attend predominantly nonwhite schools, whereas two-thirds of white students do the same. Roughly 85% of black students, and three-fourths of Latino students attend intensely segregated schools while only 11% of white and 43% of Asian students do. Twenty-one percent of NYC schools are comprised of a majority (>50%) of white and Asian students. The racial/ethnic composition of these schools is heavily skewed by white and Asian students: 73% white students, 67% Asian students, 7% black students, and 16% Latino students comprise these schools.

Poverty levels of students in NYC schools have fluctuated since 2014, but in 2018 the poverty rate was the same as it was in 2014 (73%). Black and Latino students disproportionately attend schools that have more than a 75% rate of poverty. Latino students increasingly attend these schools, their share up from 66% in 2014 to 73% in 2018, and black students from 66% in 2014 to 71% in 2018. White and Asian students also attend schools with higher poverty in higher shares than they did in 2014, but the increases are much more modest (19% to 22% for white students, and 37% to 42% for Asian students).

Achievement gaps by race/ethnicity and poverty go hand-in-hand with segregated schools. We found wide disparities in achievement gaps between underrepresented minority students and white and Asian students as well as by income status in NYC schools. White and Asian students in both math and English Language Arts (ELA) are overwhelmingly in the 4th and 5th quintiles of achievement; 91% of students in these groups score in the top 20% of all scores. The majority of black and Latino students score in the lowest 20% of all scores. Results for ELA scores for low-income students show that 26% are in the bottom 20% of scores and 42% are in the top 20% of scores. These are disconcerting results compared to the majority (87%) of advantaged students scoring in the top 20% of scores and only 6% in the bottom 20%. Similar patterns exist in math scores, but the disparities are even greater. It would be wrong, of course, to attribute these vast gaps wholly to schools since the city is very stratified by race and class; the associated family and community inequalities are strongly related to test scores.

Expanded School Choice

In 2002, Mayor Bloomberg took control of the city's schools and greatly expanded the school choice system. Bloomberg billed school choice as a way to even the playing field for low-income students and students of color students by giving all students access to the city's schools. In theory, choice programs can facilitate desegregation; however, the expanded choice in NYC was void of diversity goals and rife with exclusionary admissions methods that have had the opposite effect. During Bloomberg's administration, Schools Chancellor Klein closed roughly 150 schools that were deemed to be failing and, in their place, encouraged and aided in opening charter schools by offering them free space in public school buildings. Charter school expansion has continued under Mayor de Blasio. Magnet schools, conceived to promote voluntary integration, fell out of favor, and magnet grant funding ceased in 2010. We explore segregation metrics between charter and traditional public schools to understand how different school types may contribute to segregated schools. A variety of Civil Rights Project studies have shown that choice not linked to equity policies can easily reflect and even increase inequalities, since the

[6] Underrepresented minority students include black, Latino, American Indian students.

most educated and affluent parents usually have better information and contacts and are more successful in obtaining the best opportunities.

NYC's choice system includes eight highly selective high schools enrolling 2% of the city's students. These schools provide exceptional opportunities to students who attend. From the 1930s the specialized high schools boast a long history of fourteen Nobel laureates and numerous Pulitzer-Prize winners. In 1971, the Hecht-Calandra Act was passed, requiring one test, the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT), to be the sole factor in determining entry to one of the specialized high schools.[7] However, research shows that exam performance is highly correlated with parental educational attainment and socioeconomic status, thus tests, such as the SHSAT, used as a single measure of "merit" contribute to inequities. Attendance in the specialized high schools is highly skewed with heavy white and Asian student enrollment, and has been highlighted as extremely inequitable as very few black, Latino, and American Indian students gain entry. We found that in 2018, on average, 82% of enrollment in these schools is white and Asian and only 15% is black, Latino, and American Indian. At the far extreme, Stuyvesant High School and Staten Island Technical High Schools each have 92% of enrollment white and Asian students, only 1% black and 2%-3% Latino students. Our results showed that with so few black, Latino, and American Indian students, exposure among white and Asian students to these groups is also very low. Typical white or Asian students attend these schools with only 4% black students and 6% Latino students. Black and Latino students in the exam schools have high contact with white and Asian students as these comprise the majority of students with whom they attend.

Segregation in Charter vs. Traditional Schools

Charter schools have proliferated in NYC in the past 10 years, almost doubling in numbers (they now comprise 16% of all schools). They are overwhelmingly intensely segregated for black and Latino students, more so than the traditional public schools. Ninety-five percent of black students and 91% of Latino students attend intensely segregated charter schools, compared to 80% of black and 70% of Latino students attending intensely segregated traditional public schools. Whereas 15% of black students attend apartheid traditional public schools, over half (51%) of black students in charter schools are in apartheid charter schools. The shares for Latino students are also astonishingly high: 13% in apartheid traditional public schools versus 41% in apartheid charter schools. Civil Rights Project studies have consistently pointed to the lack of diversity policies in most charter schools. The fact that the charters are relatively new in the city shows that the city made a large commitment to creating new schools without addressing this basic issue, creating a system even more segregated than the traditional schools.

Segregation in NYC Boroughs: Charter vs. Traditional Schools

The number of charter schools has increased most markedly in the Bronx and Queens, accompanied by an increase in those that are intensely segregated. In the Bronx, 100% of the charter schools are intensely segregated in 2018, compared to 93% in 2010. As such, black and Latino students in Bronx public and charter schools, where close to all their peers are black, Latino, or American Indian, experience the greatest degree of isolation. In Queens, shares of

[7] LaGuardia High School is a ninth specialized high school, not included in the analysis on specialized high schools here as admissions are determined by audition.

charter schools that are intensely segregated increased from 59% in 2010 to 82% in 2018. All other boroughs have experienced a decline in intensely segregated schools from 10 years ago. Most boroughs have no charter schools with more than 50% white student enrollment; Brooklyn has less than 3% of charter schools that are predominantly white. Staten Island has the most predominantly white traditional public schools (42%) and Manhattan has the next highest share (14%). White students in Staten Island charter schools, where they attend schools that are 71% white and Asian, are the most isolated from black, Latino, and American Indian students. In Brooklyn public schools, white students attend schools with 63% white and Asian students. However, there is substantial variability in white student enrollment in schools within boroughs. In 2010, roughly a third of schools in Staten Island served 80% or more white students; in 2018, that percent had fallen to under 10%. Still, in 2018, one-fourth of schools in Staten Island had higher than 68% white student enrollment. On the other hand, schools in the Bronx are heavily weighted with lower shares of white students; less than 3% of Bronx schools serve more than 20% of white students and this has not changed significantly since 2010.

Community District Moves Towards Integration

Mayor de Blasio took office in 2014 and had been lukewarm on taking up integration efforts for the first part of his administration. After the publication of the landmark 2014 report, "New York state's extreme school segregation: Inequality, inaction and a damaged future",[8] activist groups increased pressure on the mayor to take action, resulting in de Blasio hiring a pro-integration chancellor, Richard Carranza, and forming the School Diversity Advisory Group (SDAG) commission. The SDAG published a milestone report providing detailed measures to desegregate NYC schools, including providing grants to schools to develop and implement integration plans. In 2016, the NYC Department of Education (DOE) initiated a Diversity in Admissions pilot program. The pilot started with seven schools in 2016-17, and in 2017-18, 14 more schools joined the pilot group. By 2019-20, 81 schools, five pre-K programs and three districts had adopted diversity plans, and currently, the number has grown to 100 NYC public schools. We review district segregation metrics to investigate differences between districts, including those that have undertaken voluntary integration efforts. Since the data used in this report ends with the 2018-19 school year, it is too soon to see the possible effect of the most recent changes, which should be evaluated after the next regular school year after the pandemic, which has seriously distorted normal patterns.

Modest Increase in Diverse Schooling in Three Community School Districts

There are a significant number of schools showing signs of reduced segregation. Since 2010, we have seen a modest increase in white student enrollment and a greater share of schools that are diverse.[9] Eight years ago, all of NYC community school districts (CSDs) were greater than 60% nonwhite. Since then, the share of schools with this nonwhite percentage has steadily declined, to 95% in 2018. There were no CSDs that were diverse in 2010; in 2014 that share had grown to 4% and was 5% in 2018. However, there is considerable intra-district variation in the shares of

[8] Kucsera, J., & Orfield, G. (2014). New York state's extreme school segregation: Inequality, inaction and a damaged future, (March), 155 p. Retrieved from http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/ny-norflet-report-placeholder.

[9] In our analysis, we characterize diverse schools as those that have shares of nonwhite enrollment between 20-60%.

white student enrollment in schools. In exploring district racial/ethnic stability from 2010-2018, we identify 34 schools that are integrating, predominantly within District 2 in Manhattan, District 15 in Brooklyn, and 31 in Staten Island. These districts were all on the SDAG's list of CSDs with sufficient demographic diversity to create integration plans. District 15 was one of the first districts to adopt an integration plan that was launched in the 2019-20 school year. We identified 22 schools that are resegregating, nine of which are located in District 24 and District 25 in Queens.

Using the categorization schema outlined by the SDAG to quantify representativeness between a school and its district, we found 42% of the schools in NYC (public non-charter schools only) to be representative of their community district (within 10% of the CSD average share of each race), 31% of schools to be unrepresentative of their district (20% above or below the CSD average for each race/ethnicity), and 26% are somewhat representative (within 10%-20% of the CSD average). Manhattan had the highest shares of unrepresentative schools (55%) and the Bronx had the lowest (16%). Conversely, the Bronx had the highest rate of representative schools (49%) and Queens the lowest (19%).

In the absence of concrete school desegregation policy, and management of neighborhood gentrification and diversity goals in school choice, these forces have a complex interplay and exert varying impacts on school segregation. This report is intended to further our understanding and debate about the state of segregation in NYC schools and also the impacts of forces in play since 2010.