

KEY RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS: HOW DIVERSITY PROMOTES BETTER EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

Racial Diversity Improves Academic Performance

(1) Improves Test Scores

- Compared to most school reforms, the impact of desegregation on student achievement is “substantial.”¹
- African-American and Hispanic students perform better on tests in schools that are integrated. The earlier students enter integrated schooling, the greater the positive impact on achievement.²
- Controlling for all other school-level variables, a study found that the only variable with statistically significant effect on students’ math attainment is the percentage of African-American and Latino students in the school.³
- Numerous studies have indicated that school integration has little or no measurable negative impact on the test scores of white students.⁴

(2) Improves Critical Thinking

- A more diverse classroom environment encourages critical thinking in all students.⁵
- A study found that “prolonged contact with racially diverse” students may have significant effects on students’ complex thinking as compared to contact with students of other races in a single discussion group.⁶

(3) Improves Graduation Rates and College Matriculation Rates

- Controlling for school resources, student-teacher ratio, free-lunch percentage, school size, and urbanicity, the most significant predictor of a student’s non-advancement to a higher grade level is racial isolation.⁷
- Attending desegregated schools improves high school completion for minority students.⁸

Racial Diversity Provides Societal Benefits in Schools

(1) Improves Aspirations and Life Opportunities of Non-White Students

- Students participating in an inter-district voluntary desegregation program reported that they feel they can “make it in a ‘white world’ where students’ futures are highlighted by real job opportunities and college preparation.”⁹
- Graduates of an inter-district voluntary desegregation program found that they felt more comfortable around whites and had greater access to more prestigious educational and job opportunities.¹⁰
- A study followed students over several years and controlled for achievement and family background. It concluded that students who attended a more middle class school had higher incomes as adults than those who attended higher poverty schools.¹¹

(2) Improves Cross-Racial Understanding and Reduction of Racial Prejudice

- According to a survey of parents and students in one large metropolitan district that uses controlled choice, 64% of white students and 68% of African-American students felt “very comfortable discussing controversial issues related to race,” and an even higher proportion felt “very comfortable working with students from different racial and ethnic

backgrounds on group projects.” The survey also found that 90% of parents believe that diverse schools have important educational benefits, and 89% of parents think that the school district’s guidelines should “ensure that students learn with students from different races and economic backgrounds.”¹²

- A set of studies found that compared to their more segregated peers, students who attended more diverse schools had higher levels of comfort with members of racial groups different from their own, increased civic engagement, a greater desire to live and work in multiracial settings, and greater sensitivity to and better ability to understand the effects of segregation on others.¹³
- African-Americans and whites who attended desegregated schools were more likely to be in diverse settings later, such as workplaces, neighborhoods, and colleges and universities.¹⁴

(3) Improves Preparation for a Racially Diverse Society

- More integration in high schools lead to more diverse workplaces for African-American and white students.¹⁵
- Schools “do more than teach academic skills: they also socialize the young membership in adult society. School desegregation is not simply an educational reform; it also reforms the socialization function of the schools. For this reason, U.S. society cannot avoid the pain of decisions about school desegregation simply by improving the quality of segregated schools.”¹⁶

(4) Improves Potential for Reducing Residential Segregation

- A study found that 68% of African-American students in multiracial schools had a desire to live in racially or ethnically diverse neighborhoods, compared to 57% of African-American students in racially isolated schools. Latino students showed similar preferences (62% versus 55%).¹⁷
- School desegregation, when fully implemented, can lead to more integrated residential patterns.¹⁸
- Other studies have found that the greater the regional reach of racial integration in public schools, the less likely that “white flight” will result.¹⁹

¹ Brief of 553 Social Scientists as *Amici Curiae* in Support of Respondents, *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School Dist. No. 1*, 127 S. Ct. 2738 (2007), at App. 13.

² Douglas N. Harris, *Lost Learning Forgotten Promises: A National Analysis of School Racial Segregation, Student Achievement, and ‘Controlled Choice’ Plans*, CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS, 11 (2006), at 11.

³ Xiaoxia A. Newton, *End-of-High-School Mathematics Attainment: How Did Students Get There?* 112 TCHRS. C. REC. 1064 (2010).

⁴ Marguerite L. Spencer & Rebecca Reno, *The Benefits of Racial and Economic Integration in our Education System: Why This Matters for our Democracy*, KIRWAN INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF RACE AND ETHNICITY (2009); Eric A. Hanushek, John F. Kain, & Steven G. Rivkin, “New Evidence about *Brown v. Board of Education* : The Complex Effects of School Racial Composition on Achievement,” Working paper, NAT’L BUREAU ECON. RES., Cambridge, Mass., (2006).

⁵ Brief of 553, *supra* note 1, at 7-8.

⁶ Anthony L. Antonio et al., *Effects of Racial Diversity on Complex Thinking in Students*, PSYCHOL. SCI., Vol. 15, No. 8, 507-10, (2004) (available at <http://openarchive.stanford.edu/handle/10408/115>).

⁷ Robert Balfanz & Thomas C. West, “Racial Isolation and High School Promoting Power,” *Graduation Gap Policy Brief*, CENTER FOR SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF SCHOOLS, Johns Hopkins Univ. (2006).

⁸ Jonathan Guryan, *Desegregation and Black Dropout Rates*, AM. ECON. REV. 94, no. 4 (2004), at 919-43.

⁹ Wells, et. al, *Boundary Crossing for Diversity, Equity, and Achievement: Inter-District School Desegregation and Educational Opportunity*, CHARLES HAMILTON HOUSTON INST. FOR RACE & JUSTICE, Cambridge, Mass. (Nov. 2009), at 6.

¹⁰ Susan Eaton, *The other Boston busing story*, New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press (2001).

¹¹ Marguerite L. Spencer & Rebecca Reno, *The Benefits of Racial and Economic Integration in our Education System: Why This Matters for our Democracy*, KIRWAN INST. FOR THE STUDY OF RACE & ETHNICITY (2009), at 12.

¹² Gary Orfield & Erica Frankenberg, *Experiencing Integration in Louisville: How Parents and Students See the Gains and Challenges*, THE CIVIL RIGHTS PROJECT (2011).

¹³ United States Comm. on Civil Rights, Briefing Report, The Benefits of Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Elementary and Secondary Education (2006) (available at <http://www.usccr.gov/pubs/112806diversity.pdf>), at 83; Michal Kurlaender & John T. Yun, *School Racial Composition and Student Educational Aspirations: A Question of Equity in a Multiracial Society*, J. EDUC. STUDENTS PLACED AT RISK, v. 9 n.2 at 143-68 (Apr. 2004); Melanie Killen, David S. Crystal, & Martin Ruck, "The Social Developmental Benefits of Intergroup Contact Among Children and Adolescents," *Lessons in Integration: Realizing the Promise of Racial Diversity in American Schools*, (Erica Frankenberg and Gary Orfield, eds.), Univ. of Virginia Press (2007), at 57.

¹⁴ United States Comm. on Civil Rights, *supra* note 14, at 82.

¹⁵ Elizabeth Stearns, *Long-Term Correlates of High School Racial Composition: Perpetuation Theory Reexamined*, 112 TCHRS. C. REC. 1654 (2010).

¹⁶ Jomills Hnery Braddock II, et. al., *A Long-Term View of School Desegregation: Some Recent Studies of Graduates as Adults*, 66 PHI DELTA KAPPAN 259, 260 (Dec. 1984).

¹⁷ John Charles Boger, *Willful Colorblindness: The New Racial Piety and the Resegregation of Public Schools*, 78 NCLR 1719 (Sept. 2000), at 17.

¹⁸ Myron Orfield & Thomas Luce, *Minority Suburbanization and Racial Change: Stable Integration, Neighborhood Transition, and the Need for Regional Approaches*, Minneapolis: Institute on Race & Poverty (2005).

¹⁹ Orfield & Luce, *supra* note 19; Richard Cole, "Fostering an Inclusive, Multiracial Democracy," *Lessons in Integration: Realizing the Promise of Racial Diversity in America's Schools*, (Erica Frankenberg & Gary Orfield, eds.), Univ. of Virginia Press (2007).