Literature Review

Using Socioeconomic-Based Strategies to Further Racial Integration in K-12 Schools

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Contents

Serving 11 states and D.C., the IDRA EAC-South is one of four federally-funded centers that provide technical assistance and training build capacity to confront educational problems occasioned by race, national origin, sex and gender, and religion.

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Introduction

More than ever before, social science research identifies an array of academic and social benefits for students stemming from learning in integrated educational settings, which is even more beneficial for younger students. While some state and local education agencies may raise concerns over shifting legal principles and political apprehension in pursuing strategies that integrate students across race, socioeconomic status, and other factors, the changing demographics warrant serious inquiry into integration opportunities.

This paper surveys the landscape of K-12 integration strategies to understand what is being implemented and what we know about the design and implementation of such policies that might create more diverse schools and reduce racial isolation. Before turning to that emerging body of literature, however, it is important to understand why integration matters and the legal landscape currently around voluntary integration.

Purpose and Need for Racial Integration in K-12 Schools

Just more than half of the students in U.S. public schools are students of color, a percentage that has rapidly increased and is even higher among younger students. Moreover, among students of color, there exists substantial diversity: Latino students now outnumber African American students, including in the South. In some metro areas, Asian students also comprise a sizeable share of the enrollment. Further, in the two largest regions of the country, the West and the South, the public school enrollment is only 45 percent White. Thus, integration today must account for a very different demographic context than earlier generations with a White majority of students and which often involved desegregation of only two racial/ethnic groups.

The percentage of Black and Latino students in 90 percent to 100 percent non-White schools continues to grow, including in suburban areas, and such schools are almost always schools with a majority of students from low-income households (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014; Government Accountability Office, 2016). White students, however, remain the most isolated group of students in the public schools (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014). Additionally, given demographic trends within metropolitan areas, research finds high levels of segregation *between* districts, although the vast majority of student assignment, including that focused on integration, occurs *within* districts.

In contrast to growing segregation, research illuminates an array of benefits of racially-diverse schools – for students of all racial/ethnic groups.[1] Psychological studies have found that intergroup contact in racially-diverse schools results in students being more likely to have interracial friendships, which in turn are associated with lower prejudice and stereotype formation. Other studies suggest that students in racially-diverse schools display higher comfort across racial/ethnic lines, which extends into adulthood. For example, in one district, students who had attended desegregated schools were more likely to live in more integrated neighborhoods as young adults.

Longitudinal research has found various life course benefits for African American students who attended desegregated schools during the civil rights era, such as improved health outcomes, higher earnings, higher educational attainment and matriculation in colleges of higher quality,

[1] For more citations, and discussion of research on racial and SES diversity, see Ayscue, Frankenberg, & Siegel-Hawley, 2017. This review finds benefits of socioeconomically diverse schools that both overlap and are distinct from racially integrated schools.

and lower rates of incarceration. These studies are significant because they demonstrate that school desegregation benefits students long after they have left desegregated settings, which in turn then benefits their communities and society. Thus, Mickelson & Nkomo (2012) argue that research indicates school desegregation is beneficial for a cohesive democratic society.

In addition, more than six decades of studies – building upon research cited in the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision – confirms the harms for students of all races educated in racially isolated non-White schools (Linn & Welner, 2007). Students of color have higher academic achievement and educational attainment in diverse schools compared to peers in segregated minority schools; White students' outcomes are not negatively affected by school desegregation. These differences are likely due to the fact that segregated schools often have fewer resources that are important for students' educational experiences, as well as the overlap with students from low-income households described above.

Importantly, this research has been cited by the federal government. In 2011, tracking this research, the federal government's guidance about using race-conscious policies in K-12 schools identified compelling reasons that districts would want to pursue voluntary integration. In introducing legislation to promote local voluntary integration efforts in 2016, members of Congress and U.S. Secretary of Education John King described the benefits of diverse schools. During his tenure, King also spoke frequently of how integrated schools connected to other educational goals, such as improved student achievement and student retention.

Though beyond the scope of this review, it is worth briefly noting that in order to realize the benefits of diverse schools and/or prevent the harms of segregated schools, district efforts must go beyond student assignment to ensure that resegregation does not occur within diverse schools (Mickelson, 2001; Oakes, 1985).[2] In addition, school practices should be evaluated carefully so that students from all backgrounds feel welcome in the school and have equal opportunities to participate (for more, see Frankenberg & Orfield, 2007; Hawley, 2007; Lewis & Diamond, 2015).

One important aspect of such efforts is to ensure a diverse faculty and staff with appropriate training (Hawley & Irvine, 2011); this includes ability to engage families of all students (Edwards, Domke & White, 2017). Moreover, equalizing resources, such as curricular or extracurricular activities, is an important part of choice-based integration efforts to ensure that all schools are seen as compelling choices across various demographic groups (see also Houck, 2011).

[2] Burris & Welner (2007) describe detracking efforts in one district to ensure that tracks did not segregate students.

Legal Landscape of Permissible Integration Strategies

A decade ago, the U.S. Supreme Court considered the constitutionality of the race-conscious integration policies used by two districts in Louisville, Kentucky, and Seattle, Washington. In a fractured decision, a majority of justices agreed that the school districts had compelling interests in voluntarily adopting integration policies: to reduce or eliminate racially-isolated schools and to promote diverse schools (*Parents Involved*, 2007).

However, a different majority of justices held that the two districts' policies were not constitutional, in part, because of the way they made student assignment decisions on the basis of an individual student's race/ethnicity. The Supreme Court believed that the harm to students from such use of race outweighed the benefits of school diversity that would result. Importantly, the decision outlined a variety of possible ways districts *could* pursue K-12 school integration that would pass constitutional muster.[3]

At first, there was considerable confusion about which integration strategies remained permissible in the immediate aftermath of the decision. As a result of threats of litigation, the initial response in some communities was to drop diversity efforts (McDermott, DeBray, & Frankenberg, 2012; Siegel-Hawley & Frankenberg, 2011). Districts also felt financial pressures as a result of the Great Recession and in some cases reduced transportation that helped support integration efforts (Coffee & Frankenberg, 2009; Tefera, Siegel-Hawley, & Frankenberg, 2010).

Efforts starting in 2008 began to help support districts maintain voluntary integration policies. A federally-funded competitive grant program supported technical assistance for 11 districts to redesign their student assignment policies to further diversity.[4] In 2011, the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice jointly released guidance about race-conscious policies in K-12 education. In this guidance, the Departments explained the *Parents Involved* decision and its application to student assignment. They also highlighted several ways districts could use race as part of their integration policy and described processes that districts should

[3] See Bhargava, A., Frankenberg, E., & Le, C. (2008). Still Looking to the Future: Voluntary K- 12 School Integration. NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund and the Civil Rights Project.

[4] While this was the first new federal program in several decades to provide funds for school integration, the program's modest budget ($2.5 million for 11 districts) – at a time when more funds were being provided through Race to the Top that weren't tied to integration and the fact that applicants did not know whether or not it was permissible to propose plans including race – ultimately limited the program's effectiveness (DeBray, McDermott, Frankenberg, & Blankenship, 2015).

Legal Landscape of Permissible Integration Strategies

undergo in implementing such policies that would show careful consideration if their policies were challenged in court.

The guidance also outlined several permissible types of race-conscious policies. First, they suggested consideration of the racial composition of a geographic area would be fine so long as all students in the area, regardless of individual student's race, were treated the same. Second, considering a student's race/ethnicity alongside other factors also would be permissible. Both types of approaches have been subsequently upheld by the courts and/or an Office for Civil Rights review.

The guidance described race-neutral approaches that districts could use, noting their conclusion that districts should only use such approaches "if they are workable" and as long as doing so doesn't force them to sacrifice other educational goals (U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Education, 2011, p. 6). The guidance highlights the use of a variety of socioeconomic factors – many of which are being used currently and described below – along with geography and/or housing characteristics.

What are SES Policies?[5]

Socioeconomic policies are the most common form of race-neutral integration policies and encompass a variety of designs. These policies typically are designed to achieve different types of diversity: sometimes only socioeconomic diversity and sometimes racial diversity. This section reviews the different ways socioeconomic status is defined in existing integration policies.

One of the earliest measures of socioeconomic status, and probably the one that is still most common, is whether or not a student is eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. This metric has several practical advantages, namely that it typically based on information that is collected annually by schools and that it is a binary measure that doesn't require families to divulge information about household income they may deem sensitive. Instead, it divides families into two groups if their income is above or below 185 percent of the federal poverty line.

However, there are several disadvantages to this measure. First, some families that would qualify for subsidized lunch due to income do not submit documentation either due to stigma or concerns such as citizenship; this would lead to misclassifying low-income households as middle-class or affluent (Harwell & LeBeau, 2010; Siegel-Hawley, 2011). Second, school districts are increasingly moving toward using the community eligibility provision to establish subsidized lunch eligibility, which makes its use less accurate because it assumes all students in the school qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.[6] Third, in 2013, the U.S. Department of Agriculture raised concerns with some districts using subsidized lunch eligibility for extraneous purposes like student assignment, although earlier guidance from the 1990s suggested that using subsidized lunch eligibility in the aggregate, like drawing attendance zones, should be fine. Some districts moved away from using subsidized lunch eligibility as a result, while others now ask families to consent to using this information for student assignment.

As a result of these practical concerns, some districts have turned to other measures of socioeconomic status. One measure used is educational attainment of parents or adults. Another, for kindergarten students, is whether the child attended a preschool program or a Head Start program. Several other districts use eligibility for government programs targeted to

[5] More districts or charter schools may have SES diversity as a goal – indeed many schools speak generally about the importance of diversity – but this review only considers district policies that actually use SES or some other factor to try to achieve diversity.

[6] The community eligibility provision can, for example, apply to any school with at least 70 percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Thus, schools that are 70 percent eligible or 85 percent eligible or 99 percent eligible would all appear to be 100 percent eligible.

low-income households, such as living in housing with income restrictions or receiving governmental assistance that is based on family income. Some interdistrict plans use residence in an urban district for eligibility. Dallas ISD is implementing a new policy that uses several measures of socioeconomic status to create diversity in select schools. Its measures include percentage of single parent households, household income, and percentage of homeowners in the student's neighborhood. Another district used median home value as part of designing school zones. All told, districts are expanding the various measures and sources used to define socioeconomic status for diversity purposes.

Finally, although not a measure of socioeconomic status per se, some districts have recently begun to consider academic achievement as part of their diversity policies or English language proficiency. Under the Wake County (North Carolina) Public Schools' former socioeconomic plan, the district sought to have a maximum of 40 percent of students in each school from low-income families *and* they wanted a maximum of 25 percent of students in each school who were low-achieving (Siegel-Hawley, 2011; Flinspach & Banks, 2005).

In a plan that San Francisco Unified School District had been using until this year, one of the priorities for families receiving their first choice of school was living in a neighborhood in which students historically had low student achievement. In Montclair, New Jersey's school district, English learner students have a preference in receiving their school choices.

While some advocates of SES integration tout that it is a less risky alternative to race-conscious policies (Kahlenberg, 2011), a number of districts use both socioeconomic and racial metrics in student assignment. Berkeley Unified School District (California), pioneered a "multifactor" approach that used two socioeconomic measures from census data – median household income and adult educational attainment – with the racial composition of students for small planning areas within the district.

Montclair, New Jersey, similarly uses several socioeconomic factors along with race in assigning all students to one of six zones, with the goal of having students from all zones in each school. Ector County ISD in Texas includes several different racial categories along with economic disadvantage status and other student characteristics in determining student assignment. Metro Nashville Public Schools (Tennessee) also has implemented a plan that includes race along with student socioeconomic status, English learner status and special educational needs to define diversity. San Francisco Unified School District previously used a complex, multifactor diversity index using a student's socioeconomic status, mother's educational attainment, academic achievement, English learner status, home language, prior performance and geography. Notably, many of these multifactor approaches using race along

with socioeconomic status are relatively new policies, most emerging after *Parents Involved.*

In addition to using a variety of ways to define socioeconomic status, districts differ as to what level they measure socioeconomic status. Many have traditionally used socioeconomic of the student or the student's household in diversity plans. For example, the Cambridge[CG1] Public Schools in Massachusetts has tried to have a certain ratio of students who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch and those not eligible. Wake County Public School System's former plan mentioned above capped the percentage of low-income students.

However, a growing number of more recent plans are considering the socioeconomic status of the neighborhood that the student lives in, driven in part by the availability of tools that makes analysis of census data[7] easier, as well as a burgeoning literature examining neighborhood effects on children and youth. Districts may differ as to the scale at which they measure neighborhood composition – Berkeley Unified School District uses what they call "planning areas," and Jefferson County Public Schools (metro Louisville, Kentucky) now uses census block groups (Orfield & Frankenberg, 2013). Dallas ISD uses both individual (free or reduced-price lunch eligibility) and neighborhood measures of socioeconomic status from the census in its new plan.

Analysis shows that subsidized lunch percentages often are different from poverty rates in school districts, suggesting the importance of at least analyzing both types of data if a district's goal is to deconcentrate students from families with extremely low incomes and/or who live in areas of extreme poverty (Taylor & Frankenberg, 2016). A recent research synthesis of socioeconomic measures and how to appropriately use them also suggested that subsidized lunch data at the student-level was of limited utility and suggested approaches for reconceptualizing and measuring socioeconomic status (Harwell, 2018).

Non-diversity-related factors also may be included as part of student assignment. One of the most ubiquitous factors, for example, may be a sibling preference for school choice. Other factors might be attending a feeder school or some type of proximity preference. Each factor often has a very logical justification (e.g., for families to strengthen their connection to the school), but such factors also make work against increasing diversity. For example, if neighborhoods are homogeneous, providing a neighborhood preference may lessen or eliminate outside neighborhood students attending the school in practice depending on

[7] Notably, the census has transitioned to conducting the "long-form" questions on a rolling basis through the American Community Survey, which provides population estimates on a range of characteristics between the once-a-decade census surveys. Thus, districts are able to access more updated data to assess populations than waiting for the decennial census.

demand, capacity, etc. Likewise, the provision of transportation is a critical aspect of whether many families can access schools of choice.

With the availability of data and tools for analyzing data, districts are increasingly expanding the ways they define socioeconomic status and measure it. These decisions have important implications for the extent to which schools are racially and/or socioeconomically diverse.

Examples of Ways SES Policies are Being Used

Having seen the variety of ways socioeconomic status is being defined and measured, it is important to understand the ways districts use these measures of diversity, because that too ultimately affects school integration (Frankenberg, 2011; Reardon & Rhodes, 2011). A general principle of studies of voluntary integration is that more comprehensive uses of diversity (sometimes called “strong” design) will be more effective in eliminating segregation. Less comprehensive or “weak” design of policies affect only a subset of students in terms of assignment.

In a 2011 study, Reardon & Rhodes identified 40 districts using socioeconomic-based student assignment policies. Of these, they classified 13 as a strong use of SES, suggesting that more districts employed weaker measures (two-thirds of districts studied, for example, used a socioeconomic-based transfer provision). Many of these mechanisms arose as part of court-ordered desegregation generations ago and have been adapted to comply with current legal parameters.

Student transfers are another mechanism used to pursue diverse schools. Originally, majority-to-minority transfers were part of many districts’ plans under court-ordered desegregation, which permitted a student to transfer from a school in which their race was a majority of the student enrollment to one in which they would be in the minority. Similarly, some voluntary integration policies give low-income students’ transfer requests a priority, particularly if they are leaving a school with a high percentage of low-income students. Such transfers can be within or across districts. Pending space availability, Beaumont ISD in Texas permitted transfers from schools with more than 65 percent free or reduced-price lunch eligible students to a school with fewer than 65 percent of eligible students; if students lived further than two miles away for this transfer priority, the district provided transportation.

Magnet schools are schools with a special theme designed to attract diverse students from across a district or surrounding districts as part of desegregation efforts. The goal of magnets is to use choice to attract students from outside the area close to a district, which due to residential segregation might otherwise create segregated schools. Although some magnet schools have strayed from the initial intent to desegregate, many still try to achieve racial and/or socioeconomic diversity (Frankenberg & Le, 2009; Siegel-Hawley & Frankenberg,

Examples of Ways SES Policies are Being Used

2013).[8] A common way to use socioeconomic status is through the use of a weighted lottery when more students apply than there are seats available. While there are thousands of magnet schools across the country, some of which receive federal funds through the Magnet Schools Assistance Program to reduce racial isolation, magnet schools alone are not a comprehensive desegregation approach because they typically only apply to some but not all of a district's students. However, there are some interdistrict magnet schools that help draw students across district boundary lines, which are a large source of segregation today. Like transfer policies, magnet schools were historically part of other district efforts to desegregate, such as use of attendance boundaries or consolidating certain grade levels into separate schools (i.e, grades K-2 in one school and grades 3-5 in another) when under court oversight (Glenn, 2010).

Some charter schools are designed similarly to magnet schools by using weighted lotteries that consider student characteristics, such as socioeconomic background and/or race, in determining student admissions (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). They differ from magnet schools in that, depending on state charter school law, they may be connected to a district or draw students from multiple districts. Outreach that is informed by diversity goals is especially critical for charter schools to achieve integration. Otherwise, charter schools could help perpetuate or even increase racial segregation (Mathis & Welner, 2016).

Controlled choice policies originated as a way to further desegregation and also provide families some type of school choice. Typically, families submit their ranked preferences of schools, and school districts grant these preferences according to space available and the extent to which preferences will help them achieve other district goals, such as diversity. The policies declared unconstitutional in *Parents Involved* were controlled choice plans that used individual student's race or ethnicity as they sought to have all schools within a certain demographic mix. Since then, some districts, including Jefferson County (Kentucky) Public Schools, have implemented controlled choice policies that consider diversity albeit with a different definition. One estimate found 56 districts employed either race-neutral or race-conscious controlled choice policies enrolling nearly 3 million students (Frankenberg, 2017). These plans also are considered strong in that they apply to the assignment of every student. Potential drawbacks to the success of these plans can be if school choices have strong variation by race and/or class – districts would either have to deny many families' first choice or have schools that are more segregated. Ensuring that families know about and are interested in a wide variety of schools is essential, as is ensuring that all groups are able to have the

[8] A recently-released manual from the Civil Rights Project goes into more depth about what magnet schools are doing to try to reduce racial isolation and what is known about the effectiveness of magnet school strategies (Ayscue, Levy, Siegel-Hawley, & Woodward, 2017).

same opportunity to submit their choices before assignment occurs. Further, some districts have ended controlled choice policies due to community pushback around the lack of stability in knowing where students will be assigned (DeBray, McDermott, Frankenberg, & Blankenship, 2015; McDermott & Fung-Morley, 2015).

Attendance zones are boundaries drawn within school districts when considering the racial and/or economic diversity of households to try to maximize diversity within schools. Wake County Public School System's former socioeconomic policy, for example, used attendance zones to assign students to schools to de-concentrate low-income students. In a legal decision after *Parents Involved,* federal courts confirmed that the school district in Lower Merion, Pennsylvania, could consider the racial composition of a neighborhood in redrawing attendance boundaries. Notably, in comparison to most of the other student assignment mechanisms, attendance zones are a strategy that do not include any type of school choice (though districts using attendance zones may also have other strategies that permit choice, like magnet schools or transfer policies).

While attendance zones are "strong" in that they apply to the assignment of all students in the district, there are two potential complications that may limit its usefulness. First, since most districts use attendance zones to draw contiguous areas, the effectiveness of this strategy may be limited depending on a district's residential segregation.[9] Second, because of the frequent turnover due to residential moves – and the fact that associating a school with a particular neighborhood can affect the desirability of housing – attendance zones merit careful analysis after they are initially established to ensure that they are both meeting diversity goals as well as are efficiently using school capacities in a district. This can happen particularly in districts experiencing rapid population growth (Parcel & Taylor, 2015). In some districts, altering zones without effective community engagement can create political opposition, which has caused some school boards to retreat from proposed changes that would be integrative (Eaton, 2012; Bowie & Green, 2017).

The Century Foundation has, for many years, published reports documenting the number of districts and charter schools using socioeconomic status and describing the different types of SES policies. Last fall, a report indicated that, for the first time, more than 100 districts or charter schools were using SES policies, including districts doing so voluntarily, as well as those under court order (Century Foundation, 2016).[10] These districts enroll millions of

[9] The limitation caused districts to use non-contiguous zones was first suggested by the U.S. Supreme Court in the 1971 *Swann* decision as a means to design zones that would not be segregated.
[10] Districts only using race are not included.

students and have a disproportionately higher share of students of color. An earlier report classified districts by several different student assignment mechanisms and found a range of mechanisms being used, including some districts with multiple measures (Potter, Quick, & Davies, 2016). Most common were the use of attendance zone boundaries (more than 35). Twenty-five districts used socioeconomic status for magnet school admissions as did 10 charter schools. At least 15 districts employed controlled choice policies or transfer policies.

Evaluation of SES Approaches

One of the earliest evaluations of socioeconomic-based integration policies as a means to produce racially diverse schools was a theoretical assessment by Reardon, Yun, & Kurlaender (2006). In this article, they concluded that it was unlikely that SES-based policies would result in reduced racial segregation, except in some limited circumstances with a specific plan design and community demographics. First, how socioeconomic status was measured mattered. In particular, using free or reduced-price lunch eligibility status as a measure of SES was unlikely to be as successful because it was a binary measurement whereas continuous measures of income produced higher integration.[11] Second, they suggested that using multiple measures of income and having a small amount of variation by income (e.g., each school within 5 percent of district average) would be most likely to achieve relatively higher racial integration. Third, the authors caution, however, that due to residential segregation and the relative income of racial groups in metropolitan areas, race-neutral income-based student assignment policies would likely have only modest effects on *racial* integration (see also Chaplin, 2002). They note that providing transportation might be one mechanism to help moderate this conclusion.

Reardon & Rhodes analyzed racial and socioeconomic diversity in districts identified as having some type of socioeconomic integration policy (2011). Because of data limitations, they analyzed segregation trends in 23 districts (out of 40 identified). They conclude that, as of 2006-07, there had been little change in racial or economic segregation in district with such plans. For districts with "strong" SES-based plans, which often replaced race-conscious policies, they had maintained somewhat racially diverse schools; these plans did lead to some reduction in economic segregation. For districts with "weak" plans, the authors speculated that the policy mechanisms were too weak in affecting a limited number of students. Finally, they found that racial and economic segregation *increased* when race-conscious student assignment policies were replaced with weak uses of socioeconomic status. However, they caution that data are limited given the recency with which socioeconomic plans had been implemented.[12]

[11] Encouragingly, since this article was published, districts seem more likely to use at least quasi-continuous measures of income that the authors conceded to be unlikely and a constraint on the extent to which income-based plans could facilitate racial desegregation.

[12] Frankenberg and colleagues are in the process of expanding upon Reardon & Rhodes work with more recent data and an updated set of districts they have identified as implementing voluntary integration policies (using either race and/or socioeconomic status). Empirical results from approximately 60 districts through 2014-15 school year are not yet available but will add to Reardon & Rhodes as another systematic examination of contemporary integration efforts.

Evaluation of SES Approaches

In addition to the study across districts using socioeconomic integration, there are case studies of individual district efforts. While the case-specific details might limit the generalizability of these findings, they nonetheless provide further evidence about the effectiveness of SES policies under certain contextual conditions.

Siegel-Hawley (2011) analyzed segregation in the school districts in Wake County, North Carolina, and Cambridge, Massachusetts, two districts that had switched from race-conscious integration policies around the same time (2000/2001) and replaced them with socioeconomic-based policies. Although the mechanics of each differed, both districts aimed to have each school with a certain composition of low-income and more affluent students. Because of district characteristics, such measures might be more successful in creating racially and economically diverse schools. Siegel-Hawley ultimately concluded it was difficult to understand whether the SES policies could create racially diverse schools because the policies had not been implemented fully to create economically balanced schools; the early implementation of SES had, however, coincided with modest reductions in racial diversity in both districts (see also Flinspach & Banks, 2005).

Because it was one of the first districts to use a generalized consideration of race, a few studies have exampled Berkeley Unified's (California) voluntary integration policy. An earlier 2009 study of Berkeley found that elementary schools had fairly similar racial diversity to the overall district composition though there was more variability with respect to low-income students (Chávez & Frankenberg, 2009). In addition to their use of racial composition, educational attainment, and household income to draw three large zones and assign each student a diversity category, the district engages in a range of practices to make sure that the choice-based system doesn't disadvantage low-income or students of color. Moreover, the vast majority of students received their first-choice school. A subsequent study by Richards, Stroub, Heilig, & Volonnino (2012) suggested that the Berkeley model could possibly be generalized to be successful in some diverse urban areas depending upon policy design.

The Century Foundation publishes regular reports about socioeconomic policies being implemented in districts around the country, which is a useful addition to the knowledge base but is largely descriptive in nature.

Frankenberg (2017) studied two iterations of race-conscious socioeconomic controlled choice policies in Jefferson County Public Schools (metro Louisville, Kentucky) in a half-White, half-nonWhite countywide district with high student poverty. In each iteration of the policy, the district used racial composition along with other socioeconomic characteristics of census block groups for diversity. The study finds slight increase in segregation, particularly for Black students, although stable or increasing integration for Latino and White students. Findings for economic segregation were mixed, showing increased integration using some measures of segregation.

Reports by a court monitor in the San Francisco, California Unified School District (SFUSD) desegregation case indicated the challenges of implementing a race-neutral diversity index in reducing racial isolation. After California passed Proposition 209, SFUSD was trying to pursue court-ordered racial desegregation but without actually using race-conscious policies.[13] As described earlier, SFUSD used an array of factors in its diversity index, which it used to try to maximize diversity in each school. In 2005, the judge ended the decree, concluding that it had created more resegregation in the district (Biegel, 2008). By 2005-06, the number of "severely resegregated" schools had grown to approximately 50, up from 30 schools less than five years earlier.

Some districts have paired school integration efforts with housing efforts. A prominent example is a socioeconomic housing plan that assigned some children from extremely low-income households to areas of the county that were more affluent in Montgomery County, Maryland. Not only did this policy result in more integrated school and neighborhood settings, but these students also had higher achievement than similar peers in less affluent schools (Schwartz, 2010; see also Siegel-Hawley, 2016).

Finally, it is important to note that due to the high levels of between-district segregation, some areas have voluntarily implemented interdistrict integration policies (including some that have voluntarily continued interdistrict efforts that began as part of initial court desegregation orders). These programs differ in scope and size but are often quite popular with more demand than space available (Wells, Warner, & Grzesikowski, 2013; Frankenberg, 2007). Some interdistrict transfer plans are open to any city student, and participants are chosen via waiting list or random lottery; other programs have income restrictions. In metropolitan Hartford, Connecticut, there are two types of interdistrict desegregation efforts as part of a statewide

[13] Unlike their neighbor across San Francisco Bay, San Francisco Unified School District interpreted Proposition 209 as banning any use of race/ethnicity. Berkeley Unified School District successfully defended its race-conscious policy in state court (see Chávez & Frankenberg, 2009).

desegregation case: a program called Open Choice allows students in Hartford Public Schools, with a high population of students of color, to attend schools in dozens of largely White suburban districts. A regional educational agency and the Hartford Public Schools also operate interdistrict magnets that reduce racial isolation for participating city and suburban students (Cobb, Bifulco, & Bell, 2011). In the Omaha area, mentioned earlier, the Learning Community of Douglas and Sapry counties was a unique 11-district socioeconomic integration program that has encountered challenges in sustaining suburban buy-in (Holme, Diem, & Mansfield, 2011).

Evidence-based Recommendations for SES Policy

As is clear from the previous section, socioeconomic-based plans are still fairly under-researched. Based on literature reviewed above, as well as a larger body of research from court-ordered desegregation era, the following elements of policy design and/or implementation[14] are likely to result in more racially diverse schools.

Race-conscious Policies

A 2007 National Academy of Education panel concluded that race-conscious policies are more effective than race-neutral policies in creating or maintaining racially diverse schools (Linn & Welner, 2007). This conclusion aligns with other research such as that done by the U.S. Department of Education, for example, which during the Bush Administration required magnet schools to use race-neutral means to achieve their goals of reducing or eliminating racial isolation. The Department's own evaluation concluded that such policies had not been effective and, in some instances, had *increased* racial isolation (cited in Frankenberg, 2011). There are a number of reasons for this, including concerns about measurement of socioeconomic status discussed above (see also Schwartz, 2010).

Beyond such concerns, the relationship between race and income vary in communities, which alters the extent to which income diversity may also result in racial diversity. Nationally, for example, even though the percentage of White students who are low-income is lower than is the case for Black or Latino students, there are more White, low-income students than Black, low-income students.

The multifactor plans mentioned above are an example of socioeconomic strategies that also integrate race-conscious measures. Though evidence is limited, several districts implementing such plans have maintained racial *and* economic diversity in their schools (Chávez & Frankenberg, 2009; Frankenberg, 2017). As more districts continue to implement such policies, the evidence base about plan design and district factors that are associated with higher levels of integration when using multifactor plans should grow.

[14] Though less discussed above, the educational policy implementation literature suggests that policies can often be subverted in implementation; this may likely be the case in areas like racial and/or economic integration where understanding on the ground may be murky (Frankenberg, McDermott, DeBray, & Blankenship, 2015; DeBray, McDermott, Frankenberg, & Blankenship, 2015). Thus, districts should be cognizant that designing an appropriate plan is only part of the process of realizing diverse schools and should attend carefully to issues of implementation for plan effectiveness and to maintain support for integration efforts.

Proximity

For many reasons, proximity is part of most district's student assignment policies. It may reduce the number of students who need transportation, or districts may value the idea of a neighborhood school. However, districts should carefully consider how a proximity preference affects diversity efforts given that many districts have substantial residential segregation. Similarly, the newest round of Magnet School Assistance Program funds give a priority to magnet schools that include a geographic proximity factor in a weighted lottery even though this works against the design of magnet schools to disentangle the school-housing linkage. If proximity is a factor in any type of choice-based plan, districts should think about designing zones in a manner to try to create more diverse areas that provide a preference. For example, Berkeley Unified School District and Jefferson County Public Schools provide preference for school choices within the zones they have drawn to ensure that each is itself diverse.

Connecting Student Assignment to Other District Decisions

Student assignment can be made easier by connecting it to other district decisions. For example, location of a new school should have student assignment as a central part of the decision-making process. Though there might be demand in a new subdivision, if those residents are largely of one race, it will take more extensive student assignment efforts to integrate such a school than if a school were built in an area near neighborhoods of differing composition. The same rationale applies for closing schools. Considering grade restructuring is another tool that might benefit integration efforts (Glenn, 2010). And, of course, provision of transportation, particularly for choice-based policies, is essential. These decisions should be made considering both existing and projected demographics.

Community Engagement

The nature of new integration policies is that they are voluntarily adopted and not required by the courts or federal agencies. As a result, it is incumbent to maintain support for these policies. Some districts engage in periodic surveys of their communities as one part of this outreach. Others have partnered with various community groups, like faith communities or civil rights groups. Connecting with the media can be advantageous to ensure fair coverage of nuanced, complex issues like school diversity. Not continuing to educate the community about the rationale of school integration efforts can make it difficult for newcomers to understand the need for student assignment policies.[15] It is also essential to conduct wide-ranging outreach, perhaps even targeted to specific groups, to ensure the success of the plan. The study of

15 For resources developed to assist communities, see Bhargava, Frankenberg, & Le, 2008; or Tefera, Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, & Chirichigno (2011). Available at www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu.

Berkeley Unified, for example, found outreach to be one of the practices that helped their policy successfully integrate schools (Chávez & Frankenberg, 2009).

Cross-sector Efforts

In June 2016, three federal agencies released a letter urging school districts to work with housing and transportation partners in their local communities to further integration.[16] Indeed, earlier research from court-ordered desegregation efforts found that housing and school desegregation had reciprocal effects on each other, and coordination helped reduce segregation (see generally Siegel-Hawley, 2016). Identifying and developing partnerships with local and regional agencies could provide valuable assistance to school desegregation efforts and, over time, lessen the need for student assignment policies if neighborhoods become more integrated.

Interdistrict, Regional Efforts

Even if districts were fully integrated, students in many metropolitan areas would still attend schools vastly different in composition due to segregation between school districts. Limited efforts exist to deliberately structure interdistrict desegregation programs. In most states, interdistrict choice exists, but should be redesigned to intentionally target ameliorating segregation. Efforts like the Learning Community in metropolitan Omaha remain intriguing but also speak to the political challenges of sustaining such efforts. New York State's emerging efforts to promote school integration might provide one model of how states can help facilitate integration at the district level as well as more regionally.

Burden of Desegregation

The civil rights era of desegregation in the South (and elsewhere) has been criticized as often placing much of the burden on Black students to leave their neighborhoods and schools to travel to majority White spaces for desegregation to happen. Likewise, it is important to be cognizant of how contemporary socioeconomic strategies may unfairly rely upon low-income students to make the choice to leave their neighborhood – assuming structures like providing free transportation are available, that is, to make such a choice a reality. It is important to attend to equity in designing integration policies such that choice, or whatever mechanism is chosen, structures integration in a way that is fair to all.

[16] Available at http://www.prrac.org/pdf/Joint_Letter_on_Diverse_Schools_and_Communities_AFFH.pdf.

Continual Review of Policy

For legal, political and demographic reasons, it is important for district policies to be dynamic. The typical homeowner moves every six to seven years (more frequently for renters), which means that analysis of community residential patterns may quickly shift. Thus, establishing diverse attendance zones requires ongoing monitoring of whether populations have shifted both for capacity and diversity purposes. The 2011 guidance issued by the federal government also suggested that ongoing analysis would be helpful to illustrate the continuing need for districts' diversity efforts. Politically, it is also likely wise – and would help with the community engagement piece mentioned above – to review the need for the policy and to make any minor adjustments to zones or choice policies if certain schools are more popular than anticipated (see also Frankenberg, 2011). This process should include evaluating internal district data as well as public data like that from the census. Often examining the youngest grade level (e.g., kindergarten or first grade) may illuminate emerging demographic trends.

Transparency

As noted in several recent publications about voluntary integration, one of the challenges of research in this area is ascertaining *what* policies are actually being implemented (Frankenberg, 2014; Potter, Quick, & Davies, 2016). If this is a challenge for experts in this area, it stands to reason that it might be even more difficult for newcomers to the district, particularly those with fewer advantages to access networks and resources about how the student assignment process. Thus, the lack of transparency may disadvantage groups in a non-random way – which is especially problematic for choice policies that rely on access and interest across racial and socioeconomic groups. Districts should carefully evaluate and plan for ongoing efforts to educate the public about the mechanisms of the policy.

What We Still Need to Know

As described, research on contemporary socioeconomic strategies to achieve racial and/or socioeconomic diversity is limited – and yet it is needed now more than ever before. In recent years, some districts have ended voluntary integration policies either because of political pushback or because they are perceived to be ineffective. Research about what models exist and what contextual factors should be considered could be extremely useful to local leaders who understand the benefits of diverse schools. This review relies, in part, on principles from an earlier era of court-ordered desegregation, and today's context is obviously quite different. Federal support for research on effective desegregation strategies ended decades ago.

New research is needed to systematically evaluate socioeconomic strategies in four ways. First, building upon descriptive reports like that of the Century Foundation, it is important to understand the landscape of which districts are implementing which policies. The basic question is foundational to assisting districts and yet is surprisingly difficult to research due to lack of transparency, the complexity of student assignment plans and even questions about what is defined as voluntary integration. It is also quite likely that more districts are employing such practices but are doing so "under the radar" so as to not attract attention.[17] Other districts may be continuing attendance zones or other mechanisms as holdovers from court-ordered desegregation that they may not even realize serve a desegregative purpose. Without fully knowing what is being done, it is hard to evaluate it.

Second, Reardon & Rhodes (2011) represents to date the only empirical, systematic examination of socioeconomic plans, evaluating racial and economic diversity in 23 districts with SES-based plans. Yet, because of the relatively low number and even fewer strong plans, their results were mixed, at best. Expanding upon this work should be a priority and, of course, could build upon a landscape analysis of what socioeconomic plans exist.

Third, there are a handful of in-depth studies of socioeconomic policies though much more is needed in different areas of the country and of different types of models. For example, Ector County ISD in Texas represents an intriguing plan design with the use of multiple factors for diversity, but there is little knowledge about the plan. SFUSD had produced annual reports about the effectiveness of its most recent student assignment policy, which provided a wide

[17] Advocacy and public engagement efforts might help assure districts that their policies are within the guidelines of contemporary law and that educating the public could help to minimize potential political pushback against such plans.

range of information about growing racial isolation.[18] More such evaluations, perhaps produced through researcher-practice partnerships, would be an important contribution to the field. Particularly where policies use choice mechanisms, access to district data is necessary to evaluate effectiveness. For example, Frankenberg's evaluation of Jefferson County Public Schools' policy used student applications to assess how the existing policy compared to hypothetical alternative assignment policies not focused on diversity (2017). Relatedly, understanding the politics of race-neutral plans can also help guide implementation in other districts (see, e.g., McDermott, Frankenberg, & Diem, 2015).

Finally, in some existing studies, there have been descriptions of practices used to ensure implementation of the assignment policy in a manner that is equitable and furthers diversity (e.g., Chávez & Frankenberg, 2009). These details likely matter a great deal for plan effectiveness, and while context-dependent, could likely be adapted across a wide range of district policies.

Now, a decade after *Parents Involved,* the research base about socioeconomic policies is growing, providing helpful guidance to districts about how to pursue racially diverse schools in this context.

[18] One example: San Francisco Public Schools, *Student assignment: Annual report: 2011-12 school year* (2012, March 5). Available at http://www.sfusd.edu/en/assets/sfusd-staff/enroll/files/2012-13/annual_report_march_5_2012_FINAL.pdf.

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