

Mixed income neighborhoods and integrated schools: Linking HUD's Choice Neighborhoods Initiative with the Department of Education's Magnet Schools Assistance Program

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The Choice Neighborhoods Initiative is HUD's signature public housing redevelopment program, designed to respond to critiques of the long running HOPE VI program by providing one-for-one replacement housing, a guaranteed right to return for residents, and a more holistic focus on the community and schools surrounding the public housing development, with a goal "transform[ing] neighborhoods of poverty into functioning, sustainable mixed income neighborhoods with appropriate services, schools, public assets, transportation and access to jobs."²

From its inception, the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative (CNI) has included a strong focus on school improvement and coordination, although the responses of most applicants have been less than robust. And despite the CNI's emphasis on transforming neighborhoods of poverty into mixed income neighborhoods, this economic integration goal has rarely been applied to the local public school – indeed, with a few notable exceptions HUD and CNI applicants have generally assumed that the local school will remain a high poverty school.

This policy brief will review the goals of the Choice Neighborhood Initiative, and the track record of CNI school improvement efforts, as reflected in successful applications for CNI

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 - 2 Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, <https://rules.house.gov/sites/democrats.rules.house.gov/files/BILLS-116HR133SA-RCP-116-68.pdf>.

funding. We will suggest that HUD and the Department of Education have missed a major opportunity for cross-agency collaboration, which could be achieved by linking magnet school funding and school integration planning grants with Choice Neighborhoods implementation and planning grants.

The Choice Neighborhoods Initiative

The Choice Neighborhoods Initiative, launched in 2010, provides funds for public housing authorities and other local entities and aims to redevelop distressed housing projects and transform the neighborhoods surrounding them into “mixed-income, high opportunity communities.”³ The program offers both planning grants and implementation grants; the latter are culled from successful planning grantees, and offer substantial funding for housing redevelopment, neighborhood improvements and social services, based on proposals submitted by grantees.⁴



Regional magnet school in public housing redevelopment neighborhood. Photo: Stacey Rowe

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- 3 Rolf Pendall & Leah Hende, *A Brief Look at the Early Implementation of Choice Neighborhoods*, URBAN INSTITUTE (2013) [hereinafter “Urban Institute Report”].
 - 4 Martha Galvez, *An Early Assessment of Off-Site Replacement Housing, Relocation Planning and Housing Mobility Counseling in HUD’s Choice Neighborhoods Initiative*, PRRAC (2013).

The Choice Neighborhoods Initiative built on HUD's previous public housing redevelopment program - HOPE VI - which focused on replacing or rehabilitating distressed public housing. Hope VI yielded some valuable successes,⁵ and helped reduce extreme neighborhood poverty in many sites.⁶ However, the program failed to replace the housing units that it demolished, and forced displacement of thousands of families who never returned to the redeveloped sites.⁷

Choice Neighborhoods differs from HOPE VI in a number of key respects.⁸ First, it requires that grantees build at least one subsidized replacement housing unit for every unit demolished in the target development, except when objective measures indicate that the local housing market is too weak to warrant full replacement. Similarly, CNI gives existing residents a right to return to replacement housing in their original neighborhood when it becomes available after redevelopment. These adjustments are meant to address concerns of excessive displacement and loss of affordable housing resources that arose under HOPE VI. Choice Neighborhoods also expands grant eligibility beyond public housing to privately-owned, federally subsidized developments.

Most significantly, Choice Neighborhoods expands HOPE VI's scope to include not just rebuilding obsolete public housing, but also revitalizing entire neighborhoods.⁹ It aims to create and strengthen partnerships among organizations, agencies, and institutions to transform entire neighborhoods into communities of opportunity with good-quality affordable housing, high-performing schools, services, transportation, and access to jobs that support positive outcomes for all residents.¹⁰ Thus, grantees must combine housing redevelopment with a comprehensive mix of physical and social service improvements - including creating high-quality educational opportunities from early childhood through college.¹¹ The goal is not only to help low income residents achieve economic and educational mobility, but also to attract higher income residents.¹²

5 Henry G. Cisneros & Lora Engdahl, *FROM DESPAIR TO HOPE: HOPE VI AND THE NEW PROMISE OF PUBLIC HOUSING IN AMERICA'S CITIES* (2009).

6 *Id.* Urban Institute Report, *supra* note 3.

7 See *False HOPE: A Critical Assessment of the HOPE VI Public Housing Redevelopment Program*, NATIONAL HOUSING LAW PROJECT, PRRAC, SHERWOOD RESEARCH ASSOCIATES, & ENPHRONT (June 2002), <https://www.nhlp.org/files/FalseHOPE.pdf>; James DeFilippis & James Fraser, *Why Do We Want Mixed-Income Housing and Neighborhoods?* CRITICAL URBAN STUDIES: NEW DIRECTIONS (2010).

8 See generally, Robin Smith et al, *Monitoring Success in Choice Neighborhoods*, URBAN INSTITUTE (2010), <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/monitoring-success-choice-neighborhoods-proposed-approach-performance-measurement>.

9 James Fraser, Deirdre Oakley, & Joshua Bazuin, *Public Ownership and Private Profit in Housing*, 5 CAMBRIDGE JOURNAL OF REGIONAL ECONOMY AND SOCIETY 397 (2012); Galvez, *supra* note 4.

10 Urban Institute Report, *supra* note 3.

11 Galvez, *supra* note 4.

12 *Id.*

The legislation establishing the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative resides solely in annual appropriations bills, although parallel authorizing legislation was raised several times by Senator Bob Menendez (NJ) to assist in the appropriations process.¹³ The original 2010 appropriations language explains that the CNI grant was to be used for transformation, rehabilitation and replacement housing needs of both public and HUD-assisted housing and to transform neighborhoods of poverty into functioning, sustainable mixed income neighborhoods with appropriate services, public assets, transportation and access to jobs, and schools, including public schools, community schools, and charter schools.¹⁴ The appropriations language has remained substantially the same in the ensuing decade, though funding amounts have varied. To illustrate, the most recent 2021 appropriations language reads in part:

Competitive grants...for transformation, rehabilitation, and replacement housing needs of both public and HUD-assisted housing and to transform neighborhoods of poverty into functioning, sustainable mixed income neighborhoods with appropriate services, schools, public assets, transportation and access to jobs.¹⁵

Analyzing CNI Grant Recipients' Education Initiatives (or Lack Thereof)

There is little detail on applicants' plans to implement the educational goals of the Choice Neighborhoods program in their grant profiles the HUD website.¹⁶ Although education is supposed to be a central component of any CNI plan, out of a total of 135 CNI planning and implementation grant recipients from 2010-20, 79 do not specify any school-related plans. Most of the other profiles reference educational interventions that do not contemplate any reductions of poverty concentration or racial isolation in the schools serving the Choice Neighborhoods district - including new construction, early childhood education, connections to

13 The authorizing legislation introduced by Senator Menendez - though never passed – provides more detail on Congressional intent for the CNI, specifying that funds can be used for “comprehensive education reform,” with a goal of “improv[ing] educational achievements.” The proposed language specifically opens up space for integration techniques like magnet schools and inter-district transfer; it requires transformation plans to show that interventions will achieve “effective education programs and public schools, including charter schools and other autonomous public schools” and sets selection criteria including “demonstrat[ing] that the residents of revitalized housing developments have or will have access to high-quality educational opportunities...in or outside of the neighborhood.” Proposed bill - S.3537 (114th Congress, 2016). <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/3537>.

14 Public Law 111-117 - Omnibus Appropriations Bill for 2010. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-111publ117/pdf/PLAW-111publ117.pdf>.

15 Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, <https://rules.house.gov/sites/democrats.rules.house.gov/files/BILLS-116HR133SA-RCP-116-68.pdf>.

16 See <https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PA/documents/CN-FY20-Planning-Grant-Summaries.pdf> (planning grantees) and https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/ph/cn/grants (implementation grants). See Appendix A for a summary of school-related content in the profiles.

the Promise Neighborhoods program, and a variety of standard education reforms. In contrast, four grantees indicate that some off-site replacement housing will be located in areas with access to higher performing schools. One profile mentions proximity of the development to a high performing magnet school.

A closer look at the publicly available applications and transformation plans¹⁷ of 20 Choice Neighborhoods “implementation” grantees (the sites awarded full CNI funding) found similar results, with the exception of Tampa, which mentions the role of magnet schools in its plan.

While many traditional school reforms can and will yield positive results for students, failure specifically to promote economic and racial integration omits a key educational reform that is intimately linked to the goal of transforming a high poverty neighborhood into a mixed income neighborhood. In this context, the lack of emphasis on school integration opportunities in the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative is striking. Nonetheless, school integration is possible in public housing redevelopment sites, as illustrated by two of the Choice Neighborhoods Implementation grantees, Tampa and San Francisco, which will be discussed in detail below.¹⁸

Failure to promote economic and racial integration omits a key educational reform that is intimately linked to the goal of transforming a high poverty neighborhood into a mixed income neighborhood.

School Integration Should Be a Policy Priority

Decades of research has shown that school policy and housing policy are inextricably linked.¹⁹ Housing segregation directly translates into economic isolation for children in low-performing public schools,²⁰ and school segregation also drive housing segregation.²¹ Public schools not

17 We examined the publicly available applications or “transformation plans” for 17 of the 35 implementation grantees from 2010-2019. Unfortunately, the other successful implementation applications are not available online, and would need to be acquired through freedom of information requests to the individual PHAs or to HUD.

18 A third site with integrated local schools was a community where a racially and economically diverse school already served the public housing development prior to the Choice Neighborhoods intervention – in Norwalk, CT.

19 See, e.g. Deborah McKoy and Jeffrey Vincent. “Housing and Education: The Inextricable Link” in SEGREGATION: THE RISING COSTS FOR AMERICA (James H. Carr & Nandinee K. Kutty, eds., 2008); Roslyn Arlin Mickelson, *The Reciprocal Relationship Between Housing and School Integration*, NATIONAL COALITION ON SCHOOL INTEGRATION (September 2011), <https://school-diversity.org/pdf/DiversityResearchBriefNo7.pdf>.

20 Douglas Massey. “Origins of Economic Disparities: The Historical Role of Housing Segregation,” in SEGREGATION: THE RISING COSTS FOR AMERICA. 39-81 (James H. Carr & Nandinee K. Kutty, eds., 2008); Xavier de Souza Briggs. “More Pluribus, Less Unum? The Changing Geography of Race and Opportunity,” in THE GEOGRAPHY OF OPPORTUNITY (Xavier de Souza Briggs, ed., 2005).

21 For a summary of the literature on this point, see Philip Tegeler & Michael Hilton, *Disrupting the Reciprocal Relationship Between Housing and School Segregation*, in A SHARED FUTURE: FOSTERING COMMUNITIES OF INCLUSION IN AN ERA OF INEQUALITY (Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies, November 2017).

only mirror - but also magnify - the trends in larger society because they are often even more segregated than the neighborhoods in which students live.²² The costs of segregation include

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lower levels of academic achievement,²³ lower graduation rates,²⁴ higher dropout rates,²⁵ and even higher incarceration rates.²⁶ Conversely, racial and socioeconomic integration yields ample academic and social benefits for all students,²⁷ including improved academic achievement,²⁸ reduction in prejudice and stereotypes,²⁹ and higher civic engagement.³⁰ Students in desegregated schools also experience benefits in overall professional attainment and health, and reductions in adult poverty and incarceration.³¹

Despite all these profound effects, housing planning often does not adequately consider potential effects on a community's public schools.³² This translates into missed opportunities for coordinated efforts to promote integration and benefit both students in school and communities at large. While mixed income housing programs like the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative are tools that can lead to integrating a neighborhood, housing integration does not necessarily translate into school integration.

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- 22 Gary Orfield and Chungmei Lee. *Why Segregation Matters: Poverty and Educational Inequality*. THE CIVIL RIGHTS PROJECT (2005). Eaton, Susan. *THE CHILDREN IN ROOM E4: AMERICAN EDUCATION ON TRIAL*. 2007; Cashin, Sheryl. *THE FAILURE OF INTEGRATION: HOW RACE AND CLASS ARE UNDERMINING THE AMERICAN DREAM*. PUBLIC AFFAIRS. July 2005.
- 23 *Id.*
- 24 Swanson, C. B. (2004). *Sketching a portrait of public high school graduation: Who graduates? Who doesn't?* In G. Orfield (Ed.), *DROPOUTS IN AMERICA: CONFRONTING THE GRADUATION CRISIS* (pp. 13-40). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- 25 Balfanz, R., & Legters, N. E. (2004). *Locating the dropout crisis: Which high schools produce the nation's dropouts?* In G. Orfield (Ed.), *DROPOUTS IN AMERICA: CONFRONTING THE GRADUATION RATE CRISIS* (pp. 57-84). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- 26 Lance Lochner and Enrico Moretti. *The Effect of Education on Crime: Evidence from Prison Inmates, Arrests and Self-Reports*. Working Paper 8605, NATIONAL BUREAU OF ECONOMIC RESEARCH, November, 2003.
- 27 Ayscue, J. B., Frankenberg, E., & Siegel-Hawley, G., *The complementary benefits of racial and socioeconomic diversity in schools*. NATIONAL COALITION ON SCHOOL DIVERSITY (2017).
- 28 Roslyn Arlin Mickelson & Mokubung Nkomo, *Integrated Schooling, Life Outcomes, and Social Cohesion in Multiethnic Democratic Studies*, 37 REV. RES. EDUC. (2012).
- 29 Allport, G. W. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley; Pettigrew, T., & Tropp, L. (2006). *A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory*. J OF PERSONALITY AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY, 90(5), 751-783.
- 30 Kurlaender, M., & Yun, J. (2005). *Fifty years after Brown: New evidence of the impact of school racial composition on student outcomes*. INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY, RESEARCH AND PRACTICE, 6(1), 51-78.
- 31 Jacqueline Johnson, *Mass Incarceration: A Contemporary Mechanism of Racialization in the United States*, 47 GONZ L. REV 301 (2011).
- 32 Richard K. Norton. *Planning for School Facilities*, JOURNAL OF PLANNING EDUCATION AND RESEARCH, Vol. 26, No. 4, 478-496. (2007). Heather Kinlaw, Deborah McKoy & Jeffrey Vincent. *Promising Practices to Improve Schools and Communities: A Survey of Highly Collaborative and Comprehensive Education Reform Efforts*. THE CENTER FOR CITIES & SCHOOLS. University of California, Berkeley. July, 2007.

The most direct step that Choice Neighborhoods grantees could take to give their families access to lower poverty, high performing schools by aggressively pursuing off-site development of a portion of the redeveloped housing.³³ But for a variety of reasons (including, in some markets, the policy goal of retaining low income housing in potentially gentrifying areas), this has not been the approach chosen by most PHAs.

Mixed Income Housing and Local School Population Demographics

Many Choice Neighborhoods Initiative implementation grantees cite a goal of creating mixed income communities, but integrating local schools is not a stated priority. One possible explanation is that community planners assume that mixed income housing will automatically translate to mixed income, diverse schools if local schools draw from the surrounding neighborhood. But the lack of attention to this issue in the CNI applications and plans is surprising – and is typical of the fundamental disconnect between housing and school policy in most local governments.

In spite of the relative lack of attention to addressing school segregation and school poverty rates in Choice Neighborhoods implementation sites, one might expect the transition of a neighborhood to a more mixed income population to be reflected in the schools serving the neighborhood. To test this proposition, we looked at the local elementary and middle schools serving families in CNI implementation neighborhoods for the first five years of the CNI program (the results of our analysis, from 2010 through 2013, are included in Appendix B). In general, we see little evidence of economic or racial integration in local Choice Neighborhoods schools, though we also recognize that it is likely still too early to tell.

Two CNI grantees stood out

In our review, two CNI grantees stood out, with local schools that provided racially and economically integrated learning environments for children in the public housing redevelopment area. Both of these seem to be the result of intentional efforts on the part of the school district, working in concert with the public housing authority. In **San Francisco**, the local middle school serving the public housing development was replaced with a brand new state-of-the art campus, and “magnetized” with an automatic preference for the most competitive high schools in the city. The result is a dramatic shift to a more diverse student body at the school, with upwards of 40% of the student body coming from other parts of the city. In **Tampa**, the Choice Neighborhoods project relied on a strong

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33 See Galvez, supra note 4.



Credit: C. Overaa & Co. Construction

Willie Brown Middle School, San Francisco

pre-existing countywide magnet school system, giving children in the CNI neighborhood a priority for admission for two “A rated” magnet elementary schools, both of which are racially diverse and with significantly lower poverty rates than the local non-magnet elementary school. A third CNI implementation site, in Norwalk CT, did not intentionally pursue school integration, but benefited from an already-integrated local elementary school, partly a result of a district wide school assignment system that avoids segregation of students by race, in accordance with that state’s racial imbalance law, a 50 year old statute designed to prevent school segregation in diverse school districts.

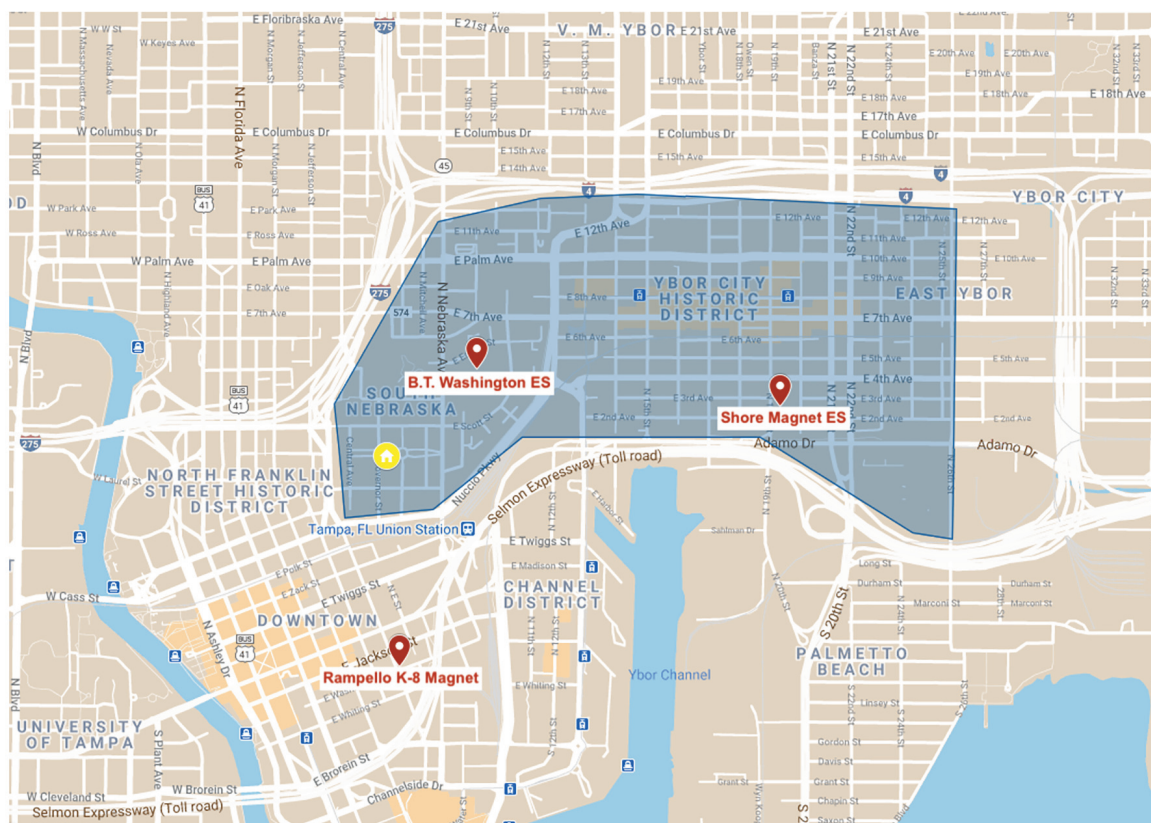


Credit: C. Overaa & Co. Construction

Willie Brown Middle School, San Francisco

Without such intentional efforts to provide integrated learning opportunities, we do not see evidence of changes in local schools’ racial or economic profiles. In the other schools we looked at, there is sometimes a temporary drop in enrollment where families are temporarily relocated out of the neighborhood, and then a gradual increase as the upgraded public housing development repopulates (see Appendix B).

This lack of change in local school demographics could be due to several factors. First, the neighborhood transformation anticipated by Choice Neighborhoods planners is unlikely to fully manifest itself in the first five years. Second, some “market rate” units in redevelopment properties may be rented to families with Housing Choice Vouchers (which are designed to pay



Credit: HUD website

Tampa: Hillsborough County magnet schools near Choice Neighborhoods redevelopment area.

closer to market rents), if demand is not high enough to sustain true “market rate” tenants. Third, many urban districts have robust “choice” or “portfolio” systems permitting children to apply for school opportunities outside of their zoned school (including into local charters), and these choice systems have a tendency to draw more advantaged children out of the local high poverty school.

Even in neighborhoods where there is an influx of higher income residents, there may not be a corresponding increase in families with children, as higher income (often white) movers into low income neighborhoods are often single or two person households without children.³⁴ Also, higher income young families who remain in the neighborhood may tend to use their economic, political, and social resources to send their children to private school or alternative choices such as select charter schools, often outside the neighborhood.³⁵ In Washington, D.C.’s

34 Kennedy, Maureen, and Paul Leonard, *Dealing with Neighborhood Change: A Primer on Gentrification and Policy Choices*. BROOKINGS INSTITUTION, 2001; Maia Bloomfield Cucchiara, *MARKETING SCHOOLS, MARKETING CITIES: WHO WINS AND WHO LOSES WHEN SCHOOLS BECOME URBAN AMENITIES* 202-206 (2013).

35 Keels, Micere, Julia Burdick-Will, and Sarah Keene, *The Effects of Gentrification on Neighborhood Public Schools*, *CITY & COMMUNITY* 12 (3): 238–59 (2013); Burgess, Simon, Brendon McConnell, Carol Propper, and Deborah Wilson, *Sorting and Choice in English Secondary Schools*. UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL (2004); Kimelberg, Shelley McDonough, and Chase M. Billingham, “Attitudes toward Diversity and the School Choice Process: Middle-Class Parents in a Segregated Urban Public School District.” *URBAN EDUCATION* 48: 198–231 (2012).

most rapidly gentrifying census areas, for example, the white population increased from approximately 5% in 2000 to just under 50% in 2015.³⁶ In these neighborhoods, 17% of the school-aged population was white - up from 2% in 2000 and 3% in 2009, but white enrollment in local schools was only 8%; suggesting that a substantial portion of white families opted out of neighborhood schools.³⁷ However, in some urban neighborhoods, higher income young families are staying in the local schools,³⁸ which reflects how localized these trends are – and suggests that targeted school integration policies might have a positive impact in the right context.

Magnet Schools: A Potential Solution

As the successful school integration results in the San Francisco and Tampa Choice Neighborhoods sites suggest, magnet schools can be a powerful complement to public housing redevelopment.

Magnet schools offer high quality educational opportunities and serve as voluntary incentives for diversity despite segregated geographic locations.

Magnet schools are tuition-free public schools that offer greater flexibility in their curricula and admissions standards.³⁹ They provide a specialized theme-based curriculum and instruction in subject areas including STEM, Fine and Performing Arts, or International Baccalaureate.⁴⁰ These special programs and enhancements are designed to attract a racially and economically diverse student body from inside and outside the neighborhood.⁴¹ Magnet schools offer high quality educational opportunities and serve as voluntary

incentives for diversity despite segregated geographic locations.⁴² Magnet schools by design typically have broader attendance boundaries and draw from a wider geographic area than traditional neighborhood schools, whether within a district or across district lines.⁴³ As a result, they are more racially and ethnically diverse than traditional public schools⁴⁴ and can achieve economic and racial diversity without assigning students based on race.⁴⁵

36 Kfir Mordechay & Jennifer Ayscue, *White Growth, Persistent Segregation: Could Gentrification Become Integration?* UCLA CIVIL RIGHTS PROJECT (2017).

37 Id.

38 Stillman, J. B., *GENTRIFICATION AND SCHOOLS: THE PROCESS OF INTEGRATION WHEN WHITES REVERSE FLIGHT* (2012); Siegel-Hawley, G., Thachik, S., & Bridges, K, *Reform with reinvestment: Values and tensions in gentrifying urban schools.* EDUCATION AND URBAN SOCIETY, 49(4), 403-433 (2017).

39 Mordechay & Ayscue (2017), *supra* note 36.

40 “A School Integration Policy Agenda for 2019 and Beyond,” NATIONAL COALITION ON SCHOOL DIVERSITY (February 2019), <https://school-diversity.org/2019policies/> [hereinafter “National Coalition on School Diversity Report”]; *What are Magnet Schools?* MAGNET SCHOOLS OF AMERICA, <https://magnet.edu/about/what-are-magnet-schools>.

41 Philip Tegeler & Susan Eaton, *School Diversity and Public Housing Redevelopment*, in FINDING COMMON GROUND: COORDINATING HOUSING AND EDUCATION POLICY TO PROMOTE INTEGRATION (PRRAC and NCSD, 2011).

42 Id.

43 Philip Tegeler, Susan Eaton & Westra Miller, *Bringing Children Together: Magnet Schools and Public Housing Redevelopment*, PRRAC (2009) [hereinafter “PRRAC: Bringing Children Together”].

44 National Coalition on School Diversity report, *supra* note 40.

45 Id.

This kind of incentivized voluntary integration is a critical tool because Supreme Court jurisprudence effectively prevents districts from desegregating schools in a more direct way, by assigning students on the basis of race. In *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District*, the court held that the compelling interest in diversity in education could not justify racial classifications in student assignment plans (even when Seattle only used racial classifications as a “tiebreaker” to allocate slots in particular schools) because the district had failed to show that these classifications were necessary to achieve its goal.⁴⁶

Currently, there are approximately 4,340 magnet schools in the United States that serve nearly 3.5 million students.⁴⁷ In a 2017 nationwide survey, 67 percent of magnet schools reported having a waiting list of parents eager to get their children into these high-performing schools.⁴⁸

Not only do magnet schools offer an enhanced curriculum and a lower poverty, racially integrated school environment, they may also encourage higher income families to move into the neighborhood and invest in local schools.⁴⁹ There is evidence of increasing willingness on the part of “gentrifying” families to engage with the local schools.⁵⁰ Of course, gentrification can also have negative consequences for local schools if existing low income families and their children are disempowered and marginalized.⁵¹ This is a central challenge for the district and school leadership.

The Magnet Schools Assistance Program

The federal Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP) offers multi-year grants to a small number of school districts seeking to create, expand, or improve magnet programs that strive to create racial desegregation in previously segregated schools.⁵² A study of 24 school districts receiving these grants across the nation indicated that there are several important strategies

46 551 U.S. 701 (2007).

47 *A Snapshot of Magnet Schools in America*, MAGNET SCHOOLS OF AMERICA (2017), <https://magnet.education.gov/getinvolved/research-studies/snapshot-of-magnet-schools-report>.

48 *Id.*

49 Kfir Mordechay & Jennifer B. Ayscue, *Policies Needed to Build Inclusive Cities and Schools*, 26 EDUCATION POLICY ANALYSIS ARCHIVES 1, (2019); Mordechay, K., & Orfield, G., *Demographic transformation in a policy vacuum: The changing face of U.S. metropolitan society and challenges for public schools*. THE EDUCATIONAL FORUM, 81(2), 193-203 (2017).

50 Siegel-Hawley, G., Thachik, S., & Bridges, K., *Reform with reinvestment: Values and tensions in gentrifying urban schools*. EDUCATION AND URBAN SOCIETY, 49(4), 403-433 (2017).

51 *Id.*; See also Hwang, J., & Lin, J. (2016). *What have we learned about the causes of recent gentrification?* CITYSCAPE 18(3), 9–26; Noguera, P. A., *CITY SCHOOLS AND THE AMERICAN DREAM: FULFILLING THE PROMISE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press (2003).

52 “Magnet Schools Assistance Program,” Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, U.S. Department of Education, <https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-discretionary-grants-support-services/school-choice-improvement-programs/magnet-school-assistance-program-msap>. See also Mordechay & Ayscue 2017, *supra* note 36.

magnet schools can employ in order to enroll a racially diverse student body;⁵³ these include conducting outreach, providing free and accessible transportation, encouraging inter-district choice, intentionally selecting a diverse site, and employing lottery-based admissions.⁵⁴ Many magnet schools also offer innovative programs around an attractive and relevant theme such as experiential learning, STEM, or fine arts.⁵⁵ The Every Student Succeeds Act authorized \$105 million for the MSAP in FY 2019,⁵⁶ but sustained and increased funding would expand the number of magnet opportunities available and have an even bigger impact in promoting integration and opportunity for all students.⁵⁷

Policy Recommendations

As part of a broader goal to transform public housing neighborhoods and their local schools, we recommend the following steps to better align public housing redevelopment with the Magnet Schools Assistance Program, to better achieve the educational goals of the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative:

- 1. Increase funding for the Magnet Schools Assistance Program and prioritize MSAP grants that will contribute to successful Choice Neighborhoods implementation or other public housing redevelopment.**

A recent Senate Committee on Appropriations report outlining proposed funds for agencies including the Department of Education specifically references the important connection to the Choice Neighborhoods program:

The Committee recommends \$107,000,000 for the Magnet Schools Assistance program. This program supports grants to LEAs to establish and operate magnet schools that are part of a court ordered or federally approved voluntary desegregation plan. Magnet schools are designed to attract substantial numbers of students from different social, economic, ethnic, and racial backgrounds. Grantees may use funds for planning and promotional materials; salaries of instructional staff; transportation, as long as such expenses are sustainable beyond the grant period and not a significant portion of the grant; and the purchase of technology, educational materials, and

53 Ayscue, J., Levy, R., Siegel-Hawley, G., & Woodward, B., *Choices worth making: Creating, sustaining, and expanding diverse magnet schools. A manual for local stakeholders*. THE CIVIL RIGHTS PROJECT/PROYECTO DERECHOS CIVILES (2017). Siegel-Hawley, G., & Frankenberg, E., *Reviving magnet schools: Strengthening a successful school choice option*. THE CIVIL RIGHTS PROJECT/PROYECTO DERECHOS CIVILES (2012).

54 Id.

55 Mordechay & Ayscue, 2017, *supra* note 36.

56 National Coalition on School Diversity 2019 Report - *supra* note 40.

57 See Mordechay & Ayscue (2017), *supra* note 36 at 8.

equipment. *The Committee encourages the Department to prioritize Magnet School Assistance applications that are paired with [HUD] Choice Neighborhoods planning or implementation grants.*⁵⁸

Congress should adopt similar language in a final appropriations bill and increase MSAP funds substantially to accommodate this new preference. This is especially critical because there is no other program within the Department of Education that addresses racial and economic diversity,⁵⁹ and developing new magnet schools near public housing furthers the goal of bringing integrated education options closer to where low income children of color live, rather than requiring them to transport across town.

To widen the number of cities and school districts that would be eligible for supplemental MSAP funding, we also recommend adding “or other local public housing redevelopment plans” to the eligible priority.

2. Explicitly incentivize interventions that actively promote school integration - especially magnet schools - in Choice Neighborhood Initiative grant applications.

As described above, most past CNI grantees emphasize neighborhood transformation and revitalization, but do not outline affirmative steps to foster integration and reduce minority group isolation in schools. HUD can and should utilize its CNI grants as an opportunity to support localities that aim to further school diversity.⁶⁰ It can do so by explicitly incorporating these goals as rating criteria when determining grant winners⁶¹ and including language in annual Notices of Funding Availability (NOFAs) specifically encouraging submissions from applicants with meaningful school integration proposals. For example, a Department of Education NOFA invites MSAP applications that would give additional priority for “magnet projects which help parents maximize[e] the opportunity for students in low-performing schools to attend higher-performing magnet schools...and... reduce minority group isolation.”⁶² Potential parallel language for HUD could include:

Each grant recipient shall establish, in partnership with the state department of education and local school superintendent, a comprehensive educational reform and

58 SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS 2020 REPORT FOR LABOR, HHS, ED AND RELATED AGENCIES: Magnet Schools Assistance (p. 212) (emphasis added).

59 National Coalition on School Diversity 2019 Report - *supra* note 40.

60 *Id.*

61 Tegeler & Eaton, *supra* note 41.

62 *Notice Inviting Applications for New Awards in Magnet Schools Assistance Program for Fiscal Year 2020*, 85 Fed. Reg. 13,878 (Mar. 10, 2020).

achievement strategy, including objective standards and measures for performance, for transforming the schools that serve the revitalized housing sites into high performing schools.⁶³ Grantees will plan for and take affirmative steps to break down concentrated poverty and racial isolation in the schools serving the children in the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative development by encouraging where feasible the development of regional magnet school or interdistrict transfer opportunities. Choice Neighborhoods applicants with proposals aligned with the Department of Education Magnet Schools Assistance Program shall receive priority.⁶⁴

In addition to these grant incentives, HUD and the Department of Education could utilize their existing authority to suggest that when a local school is being rebuilt or reconstituted, the local PHA should work with the local school authority on issues of school siting and attendance boundaries, to assess whether there is any alternative to recreating a high poverty, racially segregated school on that site.⁶⁵ Housing and school authorities should also be encouraged to consider whether public housing residents in the new development should be given the option to voluntarily send their children to a high quality school in another neighborhood or community.⁶⁶ Interdistrict transfer programs are another intervention that has increased integration and helped low income students from struggling programs access high performing schools.⁶⁷

Because mixed-income housing does not automatically create mixed income schools, more proactive steps are necessary to realize the full promise of the Choice Neighborhoods program.

Because mixed income housing does not automatically create mixed income schools, more proactive steps are necessary to realize the full promise of the Choice Neighborhoods program. Explicitly encouraging school integration would not only serve to promote HUD's fair housing obligations under the Fair Housing Act, but would also promote the Department of Education's goal of supporting racially and economically diverse schools.⁶⁸

Finally, in order to effectively connect the MSAP and Choice Neighborhoods programs, HUD and the Department of Education should coordinate the release of their respective NOFAs for the two programs.

63 Tegeler & Eaton, *supra* note 41.

64 Adapted from PRRAC *Bringing Children Together*, *supra* note 43.

65 Tegeler & Eaton, *supra* note 41.

66 *Id.*

67 National Coalition on School Diversity Report, *supra* note 40 ; see, e.g. Finnegan & Stewart, *Interdistrict Choice as a Policy Solution: Examining Rochester's Urban-Suburban Interdistrict Transfer Program*, NATIONAL CENTER ON SCHOOL CHOICE (2009); Carlson, Lavery & Witte, *The Determinants of District Open Enrollment Flows: Evidence from Two States*. EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION AND POLICY ANALYSIS (2011); Kahlenberg, R.D., *Helping children move from bad schools to good ones*. THE CENTURY FOUNDATION (2006).

68 *Id.*

3. Include public housing redevelopment (including the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative) as an eligible activity in future school integration planning grants (including the 2021 Strength in Diversity Act).

The Strength in Diversity Act, passed in the House in September 2020 and reintroduced in January 2021, includes a provision that gives priority to an application from a school district or state “that demonstrates meaningful coordination with local housing agencies to increase access to schools that have a disproportionately low number of low income students.”⁶⁹ We recommend that the intention of Congress can be sharpened when the Strength in Diversity Act is finally passed by specific reference to public housing redevelopment and the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative in the House and Senate reports accompanying the final bill.

Conclusion

The Choice Neighborhoods Initiative Program presents an opportunity to revitalize racially and economically isolated neighborhoods and increase opportunity for all - including in the education space. However, as currently implemented, the program often fails to take full advantage of the chance to promote racial and economic integration in the local schools serving the public housing redevelopment area. To maximize the program’s full potential to create vibrant, diverse communities, policymakers should encourage and fund high quality school integration programs, especially the Magnet Schools Assistance Program, targeted to these neighborhoods undergoing significant public reinvestment.

Policymakers should encourage and fund high quality school integration programs, especially the Magnet Schools Assistance Program, targeted to neighborhoods undergoing significant public reinvestment.

69 <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/2639/text?format=xml>

APPENDICES

- Appendix A: Choice Neighborhoods grantee profiles on the HUD website** (<https://prrac.org/pdf/CNI-MSAP-AppA.pdf>)
- Appendix B: Local school demographic trends for CNI implementation grantees, 2010-13**
(<https://prrac.org/pdf/CNI-MSAP-AppB.pdf>)
- Appendix C: Choice Neighborhoods application summaries for selected implementation grantees**
(<https://prrac.org/pdf/CNI-MSAP-AppC.pdf>)

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