

February 2024

# Crossing the Line

## Segregation and Resource Inequality Between America's School Districts

Zahava Stadler & Jordan Abbott

**Education Policy**

Last edited on February 28, 2024 at 2:56 p.m. EDT

## **Acknowledgments**

This report was produced as part of the Education Funding Equity Initiative at New America, which is supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. New America thanks the foundation for its support. The findings and conclusions contained within are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect positions or policies of the foundation. The authors would like to thank Sabiha Zainulbhai for her expertise and thought partnership; Sara Hodges for her technical advice and support; Sabrina Detlef for her copyediting support; and Katherine Portnoy, Natalya Brill, and Amanda Dean for their communications and data visualization support. Special thanks to local story contributors James Paul, Denita Dorsey, Julian Morris, Lakashia Wallace, Robbie Esteban, Amy Marlow, Gigi Calaway, LaDonna Fogle, Bethany Martinez, and Diana Cournoyer, all of whom shared generously their time, insight, and personal experience. Additional thanks to Justin Madron of the Center for Geospatial Solutions at the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, Casie Wise of the National Indian Education Association, Patrick Gibson and Ashley Robles of the School + State Finance Project, Emily Hatch and Jen DeNeal of The Education Trust-Midwest, and all those who shared their expertise and local knowledge with the authors during the researching of this report.

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We are dedicated to renewing the promise of America by continuing the quest to realize our nation's highest ideals, honestly confronting the challenges caused by rapid technological and social change, and seizing the opportunities those changes create.

## **About Education Policy**

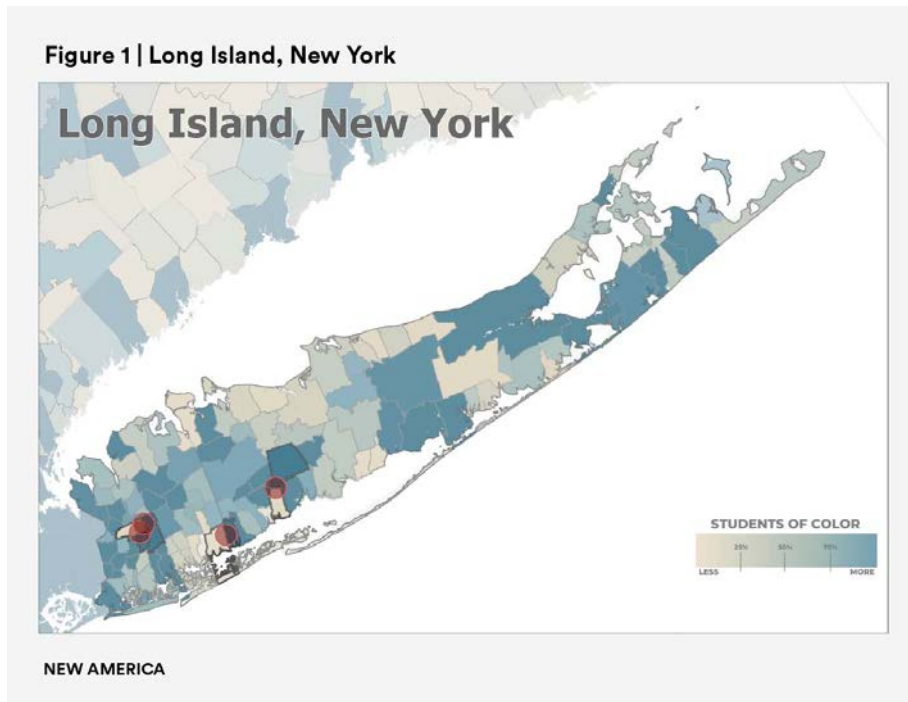
We use original research and policy analysis to help solve the nation's critical education problems, crafting objective analyses and suggesting new ideas for policymakers, educators, and the public at large.

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## Introduction

Long Island, just outside New York City, contains 124 separate public-school districts—an average of one for every 10 square miles (see Figure 1). This proliferation of tiny districts exists because, like most northeastern states, New York largely matches its school district borders to municipal boundaries, and Long Island is split into a great many cities, towns, villages, and hamlets. Long Island shows how district boundaries separate students from resources, and from each other, a problem that repeats in states and regions across the United States.



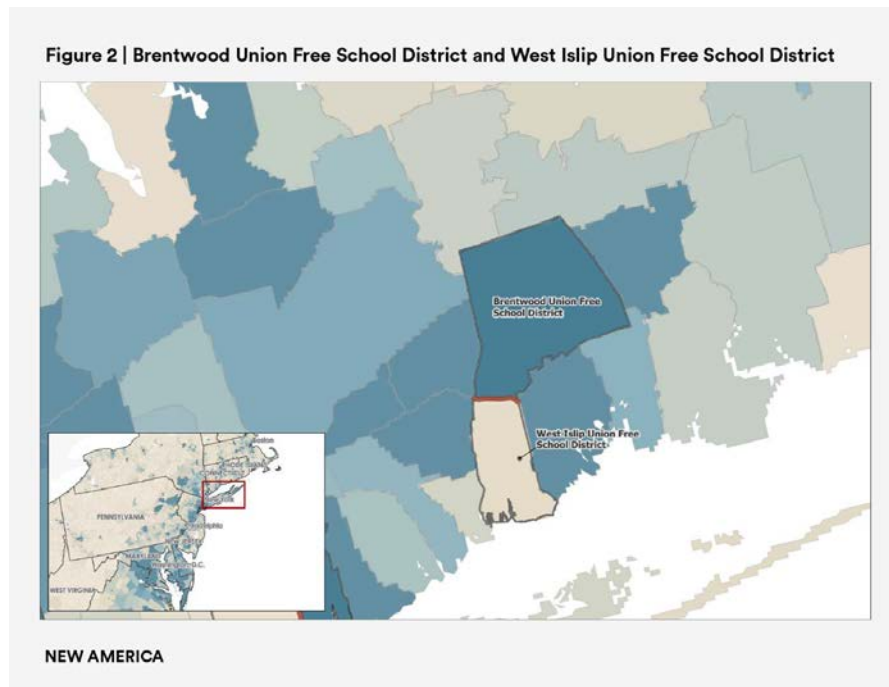
Source: Zahava Stadler and Jordan Abbott, *Crossing the Line: Segregation and Resource Inequality Between America's School Districts* (data tool), ArcGIS, February 22, 2024, <https://newamerica.org/crossing-the-line-national-map>.

School district boundaries don't just define the area where a certain group of children attends a given set of schools. They also determine the local taxing jurisdiction that supports those schools. As a result, disparities in property values between school districts create disparities in the opportunity to learn. In New York, districts draw, on average, 58 percent of their funding from local revenue sources, nearly all of which comes from local property taxes.<sup>1</sup> Big differences in property value can lead to large funding gaps, even between districts that are directly next to one another.

As an example, take Brentwood Union Free School District. The central Long Island region surrounding the district is affluent. The median household income in its county is more than five times the income at the federal poverty line.<sup>2</sup> But 11 percent of school-aged children residing in Brentwood Union live below the poverty line—a staggering number given the economic resources nearby. Thirty-five percent of the district's students<sup>3</sup> are English learners and 86 percent are Latino.

Brentwood Union borders seven other school districts, six of which serve fewer students of color (that is, students identified as a race or ethnicity other than non-Hispanic white in U.S. Department of Education data). Brentwood Union's greatest divide is with West Islip Union Free School District, whose student body is 82 percent white. (See Figure 2.) The line that separates these two districts is among the most racially segregating in the country, ranked 34th out of nearly 25,000 borders analyzed in this report for the size of the divide they create in percentage of students of color enrolled. West Islip has a school-aged poverty rate below 3 percent, and just 1 percent of its students are English learners.<sup>4</sup>

The state of New York provides school districts with funding using a formula that recognizes Brentwood's greater need for resources in order to provide for things like more counseling, small-group instruction, and other support for students in poverty. It calculates that Brentwood Union needs \$17,678<sup>5</sup> per pupil, compared to a funding need of \$10,772.29 per pupil in West Islip.<sup>6</sup> But West Islip has much higher property values—triple the valuation per pupil in Brentwood.<sup>7</sup> West Islip takes advantage of that tax base to raise over \$21,000 per pupil in local revenue, compared with Brentwood's \$6,381. West Islip's local property tax dollars completely overwhelm the state's intention to support Brentwood's students at a higher level. Including all state and local revenue, Brentwood Union students get about 71 cents for every dollar given to students in West Islip.



Source: Zahava Stadler and Jordan Abbott, *Crossing the Line: Segregation and Resource Inequality Between America's School Districts* (data tool), ArcGIS, February 22, 2024, <https://newamerica.org/crossing-the-line-national-map>.

School funding debates tend to focus on how much money school districts should receive and the state and federal policies that deliver those dollars. But they almost always take the shape and size of the districts themselves as a given,

even though, as this report will show, many school district boundaries follow lines that were explicitly drawn to segregate by race, ethnicity, and economic class, and continue to perform that function today. Like school funding distributions, district borders are a product of state policy. State laws specify how these lines are drawn and the processes and requirements for changing them. District borders can be redrawn, and border policy can be changed, to produce better outcomes for students and their schools.

This report will describe the history of discriminatory policies that created the conditions for segregation and funding inequality between neighboring districts. It will then take a close look at how our school districts are currently divided, identifying the borders that most severely segregate neighboring districts by both racial composition and poverty rate. It will also feature stories about the impact of these borders on local school communities, and offer ways to rethink and redraw district lines for the benefit of all students. We hope that policymakers and advocates will use the findings in this report as both an inspiration and a foundation for work to reform the school district map, creating more diverse and equitably funded school systems.

## **Districts Shaped by Discrimination**

The property-value divides between Long Island school districts, like those between districts around the country, are not accidental. They are the legacy of a deep history of local housing discrimination.

In the first half of the twentieth century, Long Island had high rates of racially restrictive covenants (contracts that prevented homeowners from selling to Black buyers). This was true, for example, of the famous Levittown, a large housing development built just after the Second World War that excluded Black residents, including returning veterans.<sup>8</sup> Government construction projects also enshrined segregation and racial exclusion. The federal government provided public financing for segregated developments,<sup>9</sup> and town governments pursued “slum clearance” and “urban renewal” agendas that cleared neighborhoods of Black residents and redirected them to segregated areas and densely built public housing.<sup>10</sup>

Contemporary discrimination continues to shape housing patterns on Long Island. Investigative journalists have found that real estate agents tend to steer buyers of color to different neighborhoods than white buyers, informally enforcing the segregation that was once official government policy.<sup>11</sup> Long Island is also rife with what housing experts call exclusionary zoning policies, or local building rules that make housing more expensive and are often calculated to maintain racial segregation.<sup>12</sup> In particular, many towns ban multifamily homes, which disproportionately house low-income families and people of color, and require large lot sizes that drive up the cost of single-family houses.<sup>13</sup>

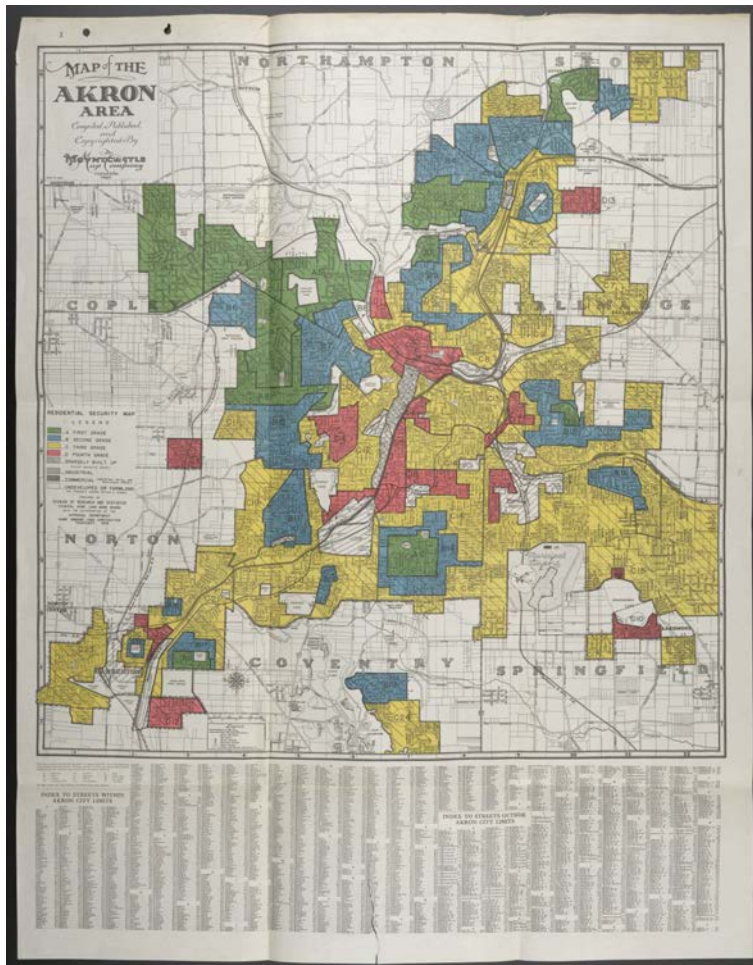
These policies and practices have produced a map of extremes: communities with near-uniformly low or high incomes, severe differences in property values, and very sharp racial divides. Since school district lines closely track municipal borders on Long Island, this also means stark segregation between school districts, both economic and racial. Of the 100 most racially segregating school district borders in the United States, four are on this narrow strip of New York land.

The kinds of policies and practices that have segregated Long Island have also created racial and economic divides throughout the country, and have created property value divides between communities of color and predominately white towns and neighborhoods.

This discrimination included policies in many localities that mirror Long Island's specific problems: racially restrictive covenants, exclusionary zoning, and racist approaches to urban renewal. It also involved the notorious practice of redlining, in which, beginning in the 1930s, federal housing agencies and their state branch offices surveyed and mapped American cities, rating neighborhoods by their perceived "mortgage security"—whether federal and private lenders should consider an area a good investment for home loans.<sup>14</sup> (See Figure 3 for an example of such a map.) These assessments took into account the condition of housing stock, but they were also openly based on the race and class of local residents. The presence of Black, Latino, and Asian families in an area almost always resulted in a grade of "hazardous," colored red on the map, giving the practice its name. Neighborhoods with Jewish or white immigrant (such as Italian or Polish) populations were generally classified as "definitely declining" (colored yellow) and sometimes rated "hazardous," while "best" areas (colored green) consisted of upper-income white households. Judgments like these set the standard for mortgage lending and made homebuying either difficult or impossible for minoritized families.



Figure 3 | Federal Redlining Map of Akron, OH (1939)



Source: National Archives, Akron, OH, Security Map and Area Descriptions No. 1, City Survey Files, 1935-1940.

The inability to access home loans also had the effect of making other housing support programs useless to many buyers of color. For instance, the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (known as the G.I. Bill) officially allowed all veterans to take advantage of lower-cost mortgages. But in practice, Black veterans returning from the Second World War could not take advantage of these discounts when banks refused to lend to them in the first place,<sup>15</sup> in much the same way that the G.I. Bill's education aid was of little help to Black veterans who were excluded from most institutions of higher education.<sup>16</sup>

The result of all these racist and exclusionary housing policies is stark. America continues to have extreme income and racial segregation between neighborhoods. And today, the homeownership gap between Black and white households has reached its highest level in 50 years, even higher than when open discrimination against Black homebuyers was legal.<sup>17</sup>

School district boundaries are drawn atop the communities that have been shaped by these policies and practices.

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**“The homeownership gap between Black and white households has reached its highest level in 50 years, even higher than when open discrimination against Black homebuyers was legal.”**

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This means that the segregation of the neighborhoods is often replicated in school systems, with students divided among school districts by race. These school system boundaries also define the areas in which property can be taxed to generate the dollars that make up about 30 percent of the average U.S. school district’s budget.<sup>18</sup> In property-wealthy districts like West Islip, those revenues push spending levels well beyond the reach of less advantaged districts—even ones that are right next door, like Brentwood Union.

Once segregated neighborhoods produce unfairly funded school districts, unequal schools then serve to perpetuate and worsen neighborhood segregation. Wealthy school districts can pay higher teacher salaries and build better school facilities that drive up property values, making wealth disparities larger still. This is one reason that residential segregation by income is worse for families with children than those without. As Ann Owens, a University of California sociologist whose research has demonstrated this fact,<sup>19</sup> explains, “Income segregation between neighborhoods has increased only among families with children since 1990. As income inequality has increased, high-income families have more resources and low-income families have even fewer. One way high-income families are using their rising resources to secure their advantages are by buying homes in their preferred school districts.”<sup>20</sup>

Every student deserves a well-funded school that has the resources to meet their needs. And students with higher needs must be provided not just with the same funding levels as their wealthier counterparts, but with the greater funding required to support their success. But because America’s history of housing discrimination has led to lower property values in precisely the neighborhoods with the most students in poverty and the most students of color, the opposite is happening. Meanwhile, the wealthiest communities can use their property tax receipts to power school spending well out of proportion to their students’ needs—and well beyond the reach of their neighbors.

## Understanding the Data

This report looks at pairs of school districts: school systems that directly neighbor each other and the borders that separate them. There are just over 13,000 school districts in America. Each can have several neighbors, and therefore several borders. After excluding districts that are especially sparse or low in enrollment (for which the drawing of boundaries can reflect particular geographic considerations) and making a small number of additional adjustments, we examined 24,658 pairs of adjacent districts and the borders between them. We measured the divides between neighboring districts in two ways.

First, to measure economic segregation between districts, we compared their poverty rates among school-aged children—the United States Census’s estimated percentage of children between the ages of 5 and 17 residing in the district who live below the federal poverty level. We identified the 100 borders that marked the greatest differences in school-aged poverty rates between adjacent districts in 2021 (the most recent year for which national data are available on both student demographics and school district finances).

Second, we looked at the differences in racial composition between neighboring districts by comparing their percentages of enrolled students of color—that is, students identified as a race or ethnicity other than non-Hispanic white in the National Center for Education Statistics’ Common Core of Data. We identified the 100 borders that created the greatest racial segregation between adjacent districts according to this measure in 2021.

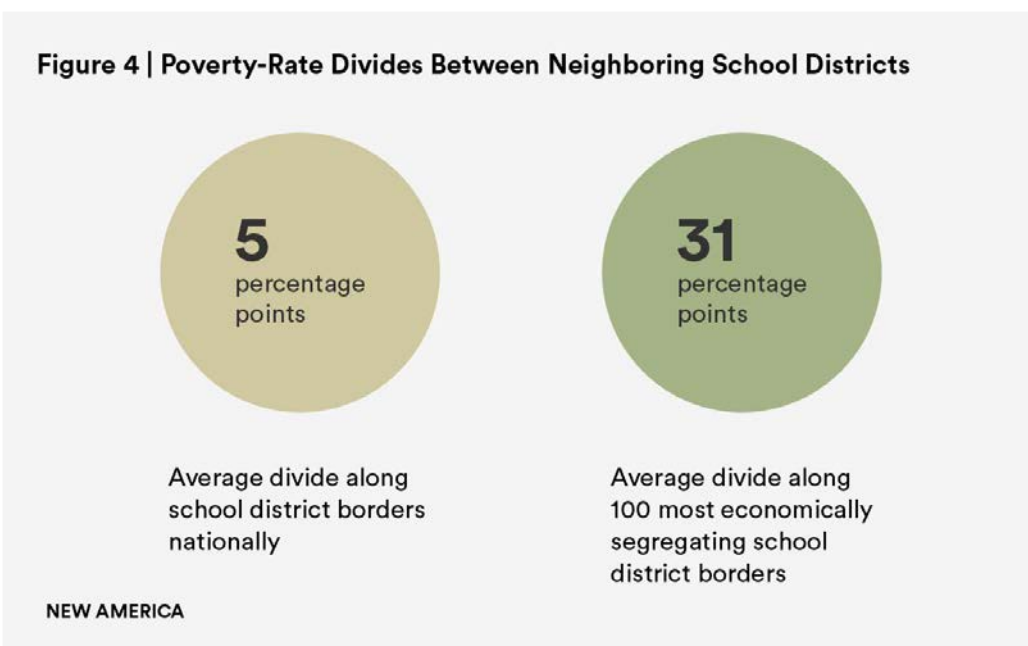
In many instances, we provide contextual information about the school systems separated by these borders. Data about school district finances are drawn from the U.S. Census’s Annual Survey of School System Finances for 2021, and information regarding local incomes and home values is taken from the American Community Survey.

More detailed information about the data and methods used in this report can be found in Appendix D.

## National Findings

### Economic Segregation and School Funding

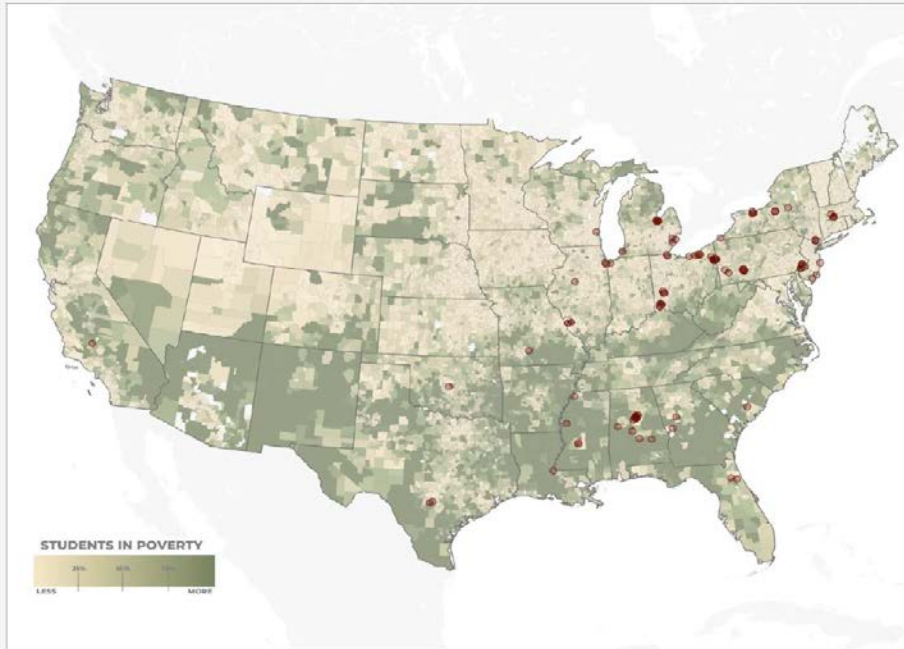
The average school district in the United States had a school-aged poverty rate of 15.8 percent in 2021, and the average border between two neighboring school districts in the United States marked a poverty-rate divide of 5.2 percentage points. However, along the 100 most economically segregating borders—those that create the greatest poverty-rate gaps—the average divide is a staggering 31 percentage points. (See Figure 4.)



Source: New America analysis of 2021 data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE).

The disadvantaged districts have an average of 40.2 percent of school-aged children living in poverty, compared to a rate of 9.3 percent in more advantaged districts. See Figure 5 for a map of these 100 most segregating borders by poverty-rate difference. A full list of these borders and the districts they separate can be found in Appendix A.

Figure 5 | 100 Most Segregating School District Borders by Difference in School-Aged Poverty Rate



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Source: Zahava Stadler and Jordan Abbott, *Crossing the Line: Segregation and Resource Inequality Between America's School Districts* (data tool), ArcGIS, February 22, 2024, <https://newamerica.org/crossing-the-line-national-map>.

The average poverty rate on the disadvantaged side of these borders, 40.2 percent, represents a tremendous depth of need. The income at the federal poverty line is quite low—just \$21,960 for a family of three in 2021,<sup>21</sup> less than a third of the median household income in the United States that year.<sup>22</sup> For 40 percent of students to live below that threshold is devastating.

Unsurprisingly, school district borders that mark a wide poverty-rate divide frequently also separate districts with very different property values. National data are not available on assessed property values at the school district level, but state-specific data are illustrative of the connection.

In Connecticut, our analysis of town-level property assessment figures<sup>23</sup> showed a strong, statistically significant relationship connecting the difference in poverty rates between two neighboring school districts to the difference in the value of their property tax bases. The larger the poverty-rate gap, the wider the divide in property value per student. Of the 45 Connecticut borders that mark at least a 15-point poverty rate difference between adjacent school districts, there is only a single instance where the higher-poverty district can draw upon even half the per-pupil property wealth of its more affluent neighbor.

Similarly, in Ohio, using state-reported property assessment data,<sup>24</sup> we find a clear and highly significant relationship between two adjacent districts' poverty-rate divides and their gaps in property value. And when Ohio district borders are ranked by the size of the poverty-rate gap they create, the most segregating quartile of borders marks an average difference of more than \$52,000 in assessed value per pupil, while the average property-value gap along the borders in the least segregating quartile is smaller than \$3,000 per pupil.

This pattern is not equally clear in every state. For instance, we find that the relationship between poverty-rate gaps and assessed-value differences is not statistically significant in Mississippi,<sup>25</sup> perhaps because high poverty rates there are so common across school districts. But it is certainly the case that, across the country, larger poverty divides are frequently associated with bigger property-value disparities.

Given this connection, and because so much school funding is drawn from local property taxes, big divides in the school-aged poverty rate—and in property values—have the potential to mean big disparities in school budgets. Along the 100 most segregating school district boundaries by poverty rate, the average difference in local revenue between lower- and higher-poverty districts is \$4,119.46 per pupil. This ground-level inequality places a huge burden on state budgets to close the gap. On average, they are barely managing to do so. Altogether, states are providing \$4,758.51 more per pupil in aid to these higher-poverty districts, so that when state and local funding are added together, the higher-poverty districts have \$639, or about 4 percent, more per pupil.<sup>26</sup>

This meager success does not represent a uniform effort on the part of all states. Instead, it is the average effect of wildly different state funding policies. The 100 most segregating borders in the country by poverty-rate difference were located across 20 states in 2021. Ohio was home to 22 of these divides, the greatest number of any state, but it did succeed at providing its high-poverty districts with enough state aid to offset their local-funding disadvantage. Once state and local funds were tallied, the higher-poverty districts on these 22 Ohio borders received 14 percent more per pupil than their lower-poverty neighbors. In New Jersey, which contains four of these borders, the higher-poverty districts on the list received 37 percent more per pupil. In Illinois, which is home to five such borders, that figure is 49 percent more. But these progressive allocations were counterbalanced by troubling numbers in other states. Pennsylvania contains 13 of these most segregating borders; the districts disadvantaged by those borders received 11 percent less in state and local funding per pupil. Alabama has 11 pairs of neighboring districts ranked among the most economically segregating, and the higher-poverty districts of these pairs received 5 percent less per pupil, on average.

Along Massachusetts’s four ranked borders, the disadvantaged districts received an average of 9 percent less per pupil. (See Figure 6 for a list of these funding differences for all states with borders in this ranking.)

**Figure 6 | Economically Segregating Borders and Funding Divides by State**

State	Borders Among 100 Most Segregating (Poverty Rate)	Average Difference: Local Revenue Per Pupil*	Average Difference: State Revenue Per Pupil*	Average Difference: State+Local Revenue Per Pupil*	Average Percent Difference: State+Local Revenue Per Pupil*
Ohio	22	-\$4,381.52	\$6,544.20	\$2,162.68	13.80%
Pennsylvania	13	-\$8,438.94	\$6,247.30	-\$2,191.64	-11.14%
Alabama	11	-\$1,380.12	\$763.05	-\$617.07	-5.07%
Michigan	10	-\$964.19	\$613.63	-\$350.56	-2.65%
New York	10	-\$9,573.33	\$8,922.80	-\$650.54	-2.57%
Illinois	5	-\$1,617.76	\$8,371.42	\$6,753.66	48.50%
Massachusetts	4	-\$12,411.72	\$10,604.79	-\$1,806.93	-9.12%
Mississippi	4	\$592.53	\$237.17	\$829.70	8.17%
New Jersey	4	-\$4,399.33	\$13,030.19	\$8,630.86	36.87%
Missouri	3	-\$2,278.21	-\$1,165.89	-\$3,444.10	-18.47%
Florida	2	-\$1,817.09	\$625.11	-\$1,191.97	-11.73%
Georgia	2	-\$6.40	\$1,854.53	\$1,848.13	14.49%
Kentucky	2	-\$809.53	\$2,067.03	\$1,257.51	10.77%
Texas	2	\$4,082.59	-\$4,015.35	\$67.23	0.58%
California	1	\$343.66	\$1,503.66	\$1,847.32	13.59%
Indiana	1	\$1,498.37	\$1,378.76	\$2,877.13	22.77%
Louisiana	1	-\$8,584.61	\$2,431.69	-\$6,152.92	-34.84%
Oklahoma	1	\$6,592.57	-\$1,739.87	\$4,852.70	54.34%
South Carolina	1	-\$1,170.97	\$1,413.19	\$242.23	1.95%
Wisconsin	1	-\$7,070.18	\$7,007.48	-\$62.69	-0.41%

\*A negative difference indicates that the higher-poverty district has less funding than the lower-poverty district.

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Source: New America analysis of 2021 data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) and Annual Survey of School System Finances.

Ultimately, in nine of the 20 states represented on this ranking, the higher-poverty districts were on the losing end of a funding divide. Having allowed economic chasms to open between neighboring districts, too many states were not up to the task of filling the gap.

## **Another View: Economic Segregation Measured by Median Household Income**

Some regions where incomes are higher overall are less likely to see wide poverty-rate divides, because fewer people fall below the very low federal poverty threshold. Many families, however, still struggle within their local economic contexts even if their earnings place them above the poverty line.

Similarly, many school district boundaries create severe economic segregation by separating lower-income communities from ones that are especially well-off. We can see this by examining disparities in median household income instead of disparities in poverty—specifically, the ratio of the median household income of one school district to that of the school district next door. Along the 100 most segregating borders by this metric, the average more advantaged school district has a median income nearly three times that of the less advantaged district. Across all 100 of these district pairings, the ratio is never lower than 2.5 to 1.

When school district borders are ranked by the divide they create in median household income levels, certain regions that are less represented on the national poverty-rate segregation map in Figure 5 above—for instance, California and several northeastern states, especially Connecticut and northern New Jersey—appear as home to many of the most income-segregating borders. The most segregating border in the country by this measure separates New Jersey’s East Orange City School District, where the median income is \$54,520, from Glen Ridge Borough School District, where that income level is almost four and a half times as high, at \$243,899.

Figures 7 and 8 below show the borders in regions that are among the 100 most segregating by median household income, a form of segregation between districts that carries tremendous implications for property value and school funding disparities. High-wealth regions should not escape notice simply because their deepest divides occur between communities that live above the poverty line.

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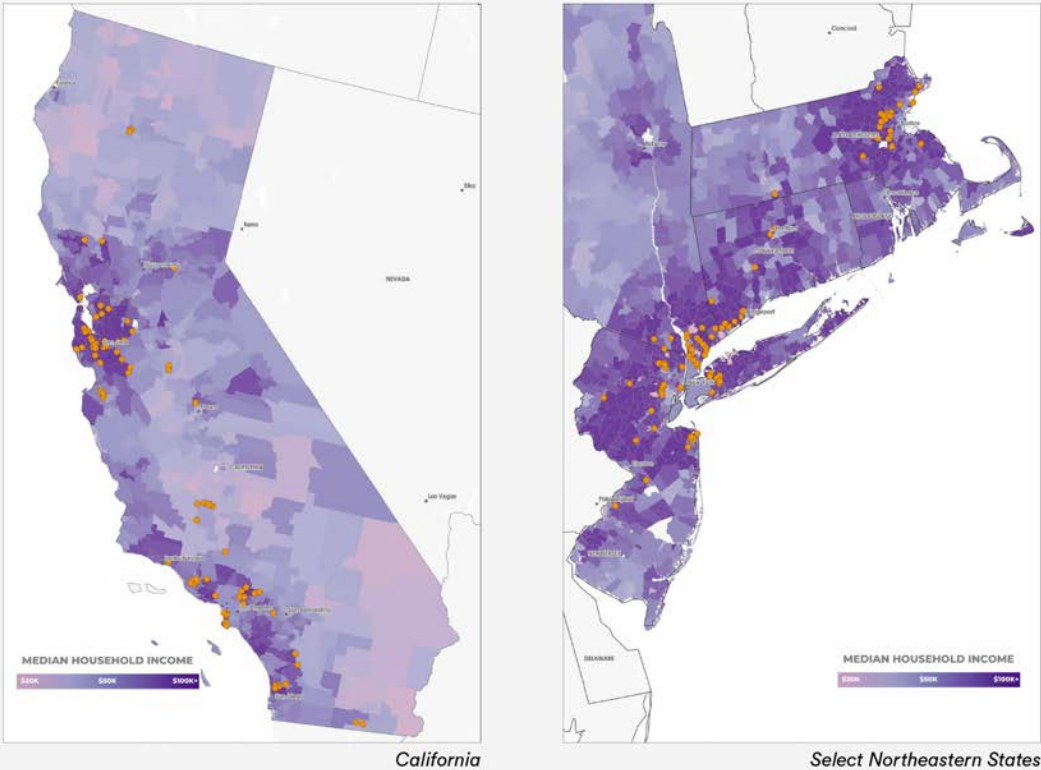
**“High-wealth regions should not escape notice simply because their deepest divides occur between communities that live above the poverty line.”**

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The higher-income districts in these states are often able to raise and keep astronomical amounts of property tax revenues for their schools, creating huge resource disparities with their less-advantaged neighbors. These divides are certainly worthy of policy attention.

Figure 7 (Left) & 8 (Right) | Borders Among the 100 Most Segregating, Measured by Divide in Median Household Income



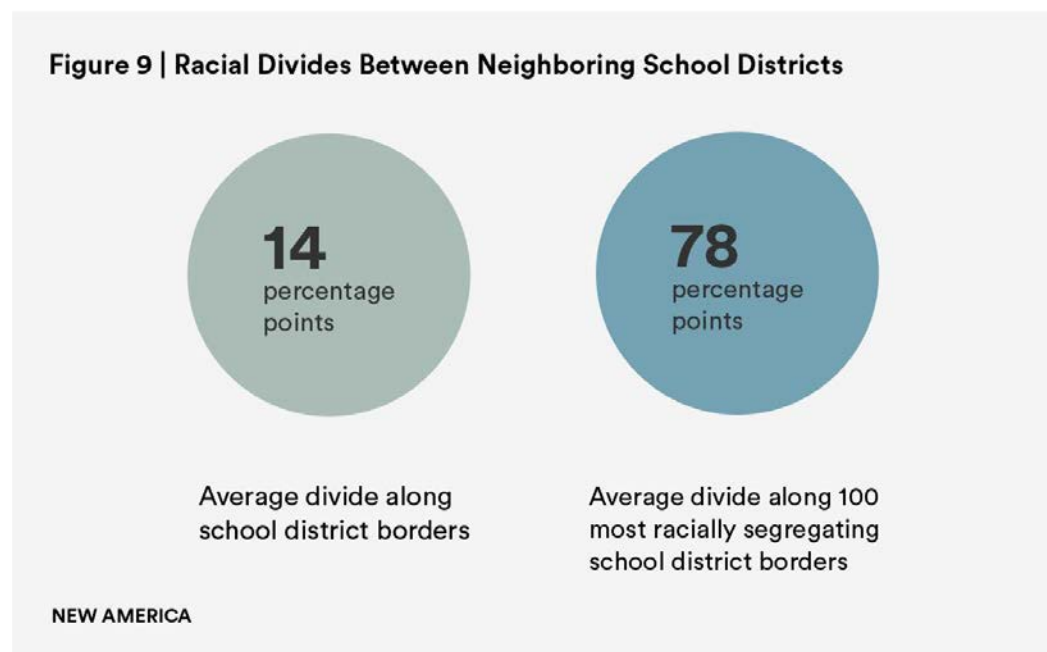
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Source: Zahava Stadler and Jordan Abbott, *Crossing the Line: Segregation and Resource Inequality Between America's School Districts* (data tool), ArcGIS, February 22, 2024, <https://newamerica.org/crossing-the-line-national-map>.

## Racial Segregation and School Funding

American school districts serve a very diverse population. Nationwide, 53 percent of public-school district enrollees are students of color, including 14 percent Black students, 28 percent Latino students, and 5 percent Asian students, among others. However, these students are highly concentrated in a relatively small number of districts. Forty-six percent of students of color are enrolled in just 1 percent of all school districts. Meanwhile, 26 percent of school systems serve student populations that are more than 90 percent white.

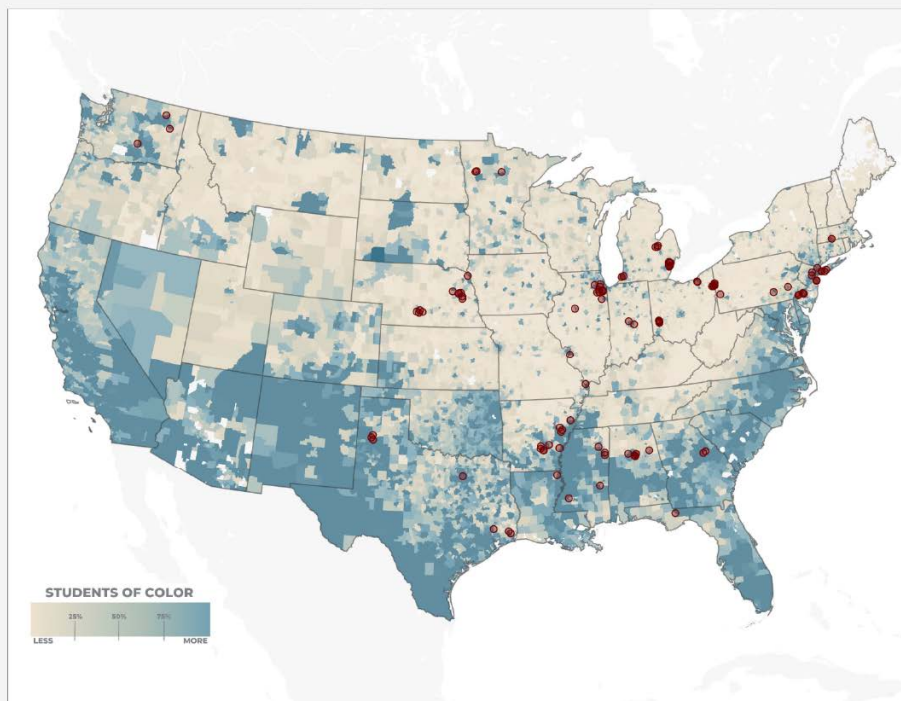
The average district border included in our analysis separates districts that are 14 percentage points apart in their proportions of students of color. But more severe segregation is not rare. Nearly 20 percent of borders between neighboring districts mark a 25-percentage-point difference in the enrollment of students of color. Along the 100 most racially segregating school district borders in the country—those that create the greatest divide between neighboring districts in the proportion of students of color enrolled—the separation is, on average, between a district that 92.4 percent white and a district that is 86 percent students of color. (See Figure 9.)



Source: New America analysis of 2021 data from the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics' Common Core of Data (CCD).

See Figure 10 below for a map of these 100 most racially segregating borders. A full list of these borders and the districts they separate can be found in Appendix B.

Figure 10 | 100 Most Segregating School District Borders by Difference in Percent Students of Color



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Source: Zahava Stadler and Jordan Abbott, *Crossing the Line: Segregation and Resource Inequality Between America's School Districts* (data tool), ArcGIS, February 22, 2024, <https://newamerica.org/crossing-the-line-national-map>.

Like districts serving more students in poverty, those serving more students of color are likely to face the challenge of lower property values. In the absence of national data on property valuation by school district, state-specific analysis can again prove useful. In Connecticut, our analysis of town data on property assessment <sup>27</sup> shows a clear, statistically significant relationship between the gap in racial composition between neighboring districts and the difference in their property wealth levels. Even along borders with a racial difference of 10 percentage points or smaller, the districts serving more students of color have lower property valuations per pupil, by just under \$175,000. And where the border marks a racial difference of 50 percentage points or more, the disparity is far more extreme. The district with a higher proportion of students of color has almost \$675,000 less in per-pupil property value, on average. The wider the racial chasm, the bigger the difference in property tax capacity.

Connecticut is home to some particularly stark divides, but this problem is present across a number of other states for which data were available. We found statistically significant relationships between neighboring-district racial differences and property value disparities in Arkansas and Ohio (which each have nine of the country's most racially segregating school district borders), and Mississippi (which has five).

This problem is directly attributable to America's history of racist policies and practices in the area of housing. The economic and racial segregation of neighborhoods, cemented through the decades of U.S. housing policy, has led to lower property values in communities of color. Since explicitly and implicitly racist policies placed homeownership out of reach for many Black and Latino families for an extended period in the twentieth century, these communities were largely denied the opportunity to build wealth in their homes in the way that many white families did in the 1940s and 1950s, a problem that still shapes neighborhoods today.<sup>28</sup>

This is not to say that residential patterns have remained unchanged since the days of redlining; populations have certainly shifted over time, and suburbs especially have become steadily more diverse, with the 2020 census counting 45 percent of suburbanites as people of color.<sup>29</sup> But the effects of discriminatory policies have persisted. Past exclusion from housing markets prevented many families of color from building home equity, which is the predominant means of wealth-building for American middle-class households.<sup>30</sup> As a result, parents of color have had less accumulated wealth to pass along to their heirs,<sup>31</sup> creating barriers for members of the next generation as they seek to establish themselves as financially secure homeowners, continuing the cycle. In 2020, three economists published an examination of newly compiled historical data on household-level finances in the United States that found that wealth inequality between Black and white households had not narrowed at all in the seven decades following the Second World War.<sup>32</sup>

This has led to a wide racial disparity in homeownership today. The overall homeownership rate in the United States (that is, the percentage of housing units in the United States that are owner-occupied) is 65 percent, with white homeownership at 73 percent and Black homeownership at 43 percent.<sup>33</sup> Even today, neighborhoods that were historically redlined have dramatically lower home values than areas that were deemed less "hazardous."<sup>34</sup> Further, homes in present-day Black neighborhoods are consistently valued less than homes in non-Black neighborhoods, by roughly 21 to 23 percent, according to one study.<sup>35</sup> The ongoing devaluation of Black-owned homes adds up to billions of dollars in lost wealth.

When school district boundaries are drawn narrowly around communities that are predominately white or non-white, the divides in property wealth translate into unequal ability to raise property tax dollars for schools. Along the 100 most racially segregating school district boundaries, this is indeed the case. On average, the districts serving more students of color collect \$2,222.70 less in local revenue per pupil than the predominately white districts across these borders. This puts an expensive responsibility before states to compensate for these ground-level inequalities so that students of color do not lose out. In the aggregate, state aid is indeed making up the difference.

The districts serving more students of color are receiving \$3,310.59 more in state funding per pupil, so even after the lion's share of that money is poured into the local revenue gap, these districts receive \$1,087.89 more per pupil in state and local funding combined.

Not all states have met this challenge, however. The nation's 100 most racially segregating school district borders can be found in just 18 states. Along these borders, the district serving more students of color receives less state and local funding than its predominately white neighbor district in five states. Thankfully, this is a minority of states. Still, the funding data in some of those states tells a worrying story. Nebraska is home to eleven of these most segregating borders and the pairs of districts they separate. Among these districts, on average, the ones serving more students of color raise almost \$8,300 less per pupil from local sources than their neighbor-districts. The state funding system in Nebraska provides only \$1,800 more to these districts in state aid per pupil on average, less than a quarter of what is needed to make up the deficit. In New York, where there are five of these school district borders, the districts serving more students of color along these borders raise almost \$11,700 less in local revenue per pupil than their neighbor-districts on average. New York compensates with over \$9,100 more per pupil in state aid to address the funding gap, but those districts serving more students of color still wind up \$2,500 per pupil behind their neighbors, on average. (See Figure 11 for a list of these funding differences for all states with borders in this ranking.)

**Figure 11 | Racially Segregating Borders and Funding Divides by State**

State	Borders Among 100 Most Segregating (Percent Students of Color)	Average Difference: Local Revenue Per Pupil*	Average Difference: State Revenue Per Pupil*	Average Difference: State+Local Revenue Per Pupil*	Average Percent Difference: State+Local Revenue Per Pupil*
Illinois	13	\$1,612.48	\$6,898.53	\$8,511.02	47.38%
Michigan	12	\$690.40	-\$330.19	\$360.21	2.66%
Nebraska	11	-\$8,281.26	\$1,798.84	-\$6,482.43	-34.37%
Arkansas	9	\$1,057.41	\$157.07	\$1,214.48	12.38%
Ohio	9	-\$2,150.53	\$5,448.79	\$3,298.25	22.37%
New Jersey	7	-\$8,132.67	\$11,924.15	\$3,791.48	16.07%
Texas	7	\$1,325.93	-\$923.12	\$402.82	3.17%
Alabama	5	-\$1,421.57	-\$6.50	-\$1,428.07	-11.03%
Mississippi	5	\$1,621.28	-\$40.04	\$1,581.24	18.05%
New York	5	-\$11,684.03	\$9,156.09	-\$2,527.93	-8.16%
Pennsylvania	4	-\$7,129.73	\$7,785.38	\$655.65	3.67%
Minnesota	3	-\$2,509.55	\$3,445.64	\$936.08	6.15%
Washington	3	-\$2,852.77	\$1,825.69	-\$1,027.08	-6.40%
Georgia	2	\$4,547.65	-\$2,263.76	\$2,283.88	18.12%
Indiana	2	-\$893.47	\$1,185.03	\$291.56	2.25%
Florida	1	\$2,103.43	-\$1,728.88	\$374.56	3.83%
Louisiana	1	\$1,518.80	\$128.66	\$1,647.46	15.87%
Massachusetts	1	-\$11,841.06	\$9,347.45	-\$2,493.60	-12.37%

\*A negative funding difference indicates that the district with a higher proportion of students of color has less funding than the district with a lower proportion of students of color.

NEW AMERICA

Source: New America analysis of 2021 data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) and Annual Survey of School System Finances.

Even in states where the funding gap across these borders does not disadvantage students of color, the story is not all good. For example, Pennsylvania just manages to mitigate the disparities caused by unequal local revenue. The state contains four of the country’s most racially segregating borders, and when all state and local dollars are totaled, the districts serving more students of color along these borders have slightly more (by almost 4 percent) than the districts serving fewer. But these school systems start out over \$7,100 behind in local revenue per pupil. To achieve parity, the state must then muster huge amounts in aid funding for the districts on the wrong side of these lines.

This reveals the nonsensical foundation of Pennsylvania’s state funding policies, along with those of most other states. This is a state whose funding system was recently found unconstitutional, in part because of the funding disparities created by unequal property tax receipts.<sup>36</sup> The state was ordered to increase support for underfunded districts. But why should Pennsylvania, or any state, start its schools on such unequal footing and then have to work so hard to fill these gaps? Why not construct a school funding system that is fair from the start?

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**“Why should Pennsylvania, or any state...have to work so hard to fill these gaps? Why not construct a school funding system that is fair from the start?”**

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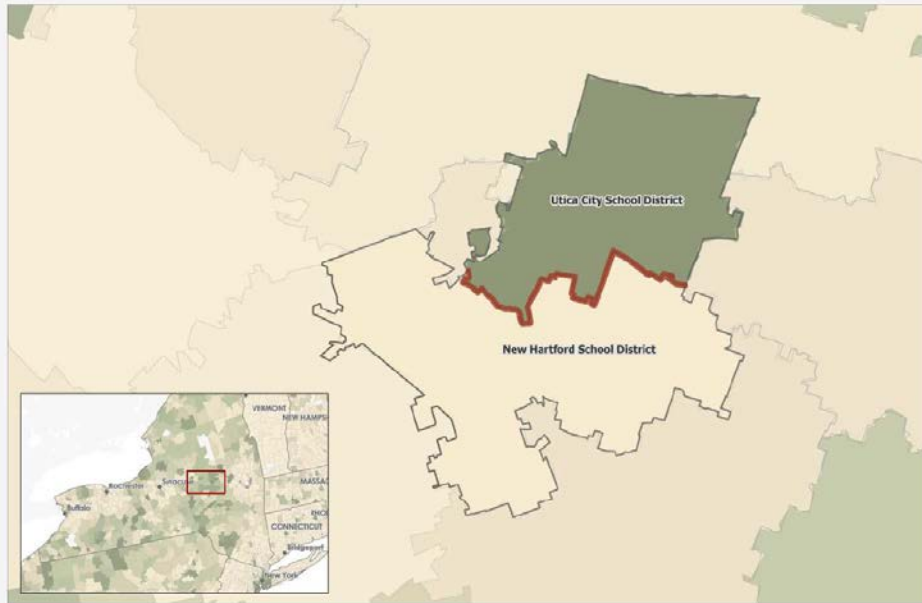
### **Local Stories**

Along the school district borders that mark the steepest racial and economic divides, students are getting shortchanged. In too many cases, the districts serving more students in poverty or more students of color are more cash-strapped than their neighbors. In all of the districts defined by these borders, children are segregated from their peers, deprived of the opportunity to learn alongside students of different backgrounds.

The specific causes and effects of these divides, however, vary from region to region and community to community. Here, we share stories told by members of local school communities to illuminate different facets of the issue. Utica City School District in New York and neighboring New Hartford Central School District demonstrate the persistent influence of lines drawn to segregate. Saginaw City School District and bordering Frankenmuth School District in Michigan show what happens when a local economy changes within the confines of school district boundaries. Dallas Independent School District, along with the Highland Park Independent School District carved out of it, offers a look at what it can mean to educate students of color in a segregated city. And Washington’s Wahluke School District and its neighbor, Kittitas School District, demonstrate what rural segregation can mean in today’s public schools.

## Utica City School District and New Hartford Central School District, New York

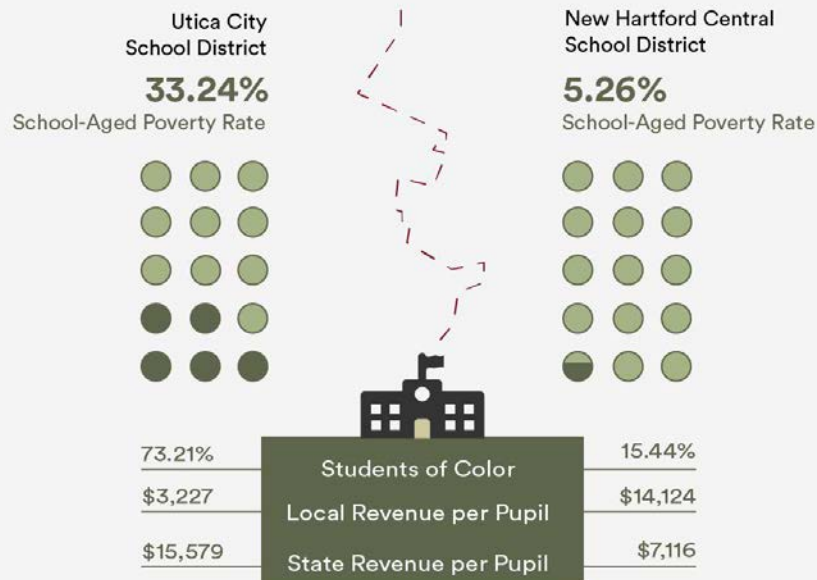
Figure 12 | Utica City School District and New Hartford Central School District



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Source: Zahava Stadler and Jordan Abbott, *Crossing the Line: Segregation and Resource Inequality Between America's School Districts* (data tool), ArcGIS, February 22, 2024, <https://newamerica.org/crossing-the-line-national-map>.

Figure 13 | Student Populations and School Funding



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Source: New America analysis of 2021 data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) and Annual Survey of School System Finances, and the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics' Common Core of Data (CCD).



Utica City School District serves a city with pronounced internal divisions, some of which were present already in 1936, when the city engineer approved the redlining map that sectioned Utica by race and class.<sup>37</sup> For example, the map includes notes on public housing projects that were then being constructed; some of those still exist. Areas that were then rated “declining” by assessors because of the presence of Italian immigrants are now home to newer arrivals from Bosnia and Somalia. In addition to evaluating parts of the city proper, the map also noted a town on its southeastern edge: New Hartford, which was rated “desirable” and described as “highly regarded,” with mention of its large home lots. The map description also noted, as a “favorable influence,” that “village zoning restrictions are very rigid. The border between Utica and New Hartford on the map closely tracks the boundary between their two school systems today, and almost nine decades later, New Hartford Central School District is able to raise far more local property tax revenue for its schools than Utica City School District.

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*The following is by **James Paul**, member of the Utica City School District Board and co-director of the civic youth organization Junior Frontiers of the Mohawk Valley, as told to New America. Edited for length and clarity.*

I’ve lived in Utica for 26 years. I’ve seen a lot of change in the city. A lot of it has been for the better, but we still have a ways to go. I ran for school board to help all students get the education that my children did. My three children went through the city school district. Their education kept me involved, and kept me seeing the shortcomings in our system; inner-city districts tend to stumble when it comes to educating our students. My wife and I were able to walk our kids through it, but we still struggled with getting the services they needed. We need to make sure that all children, no matter how involved their parents are able to be, get a proper education.

I think that this district is doing a much better job than it has, but we’re still not serving all students as well as we should be. For a stellar student, the teachers and counselors are engaged. Those kids tend to get what they need. But kids that cause problems in school, or those who fly under the radar—I don’t think we do a good enough job for those students. Our kids have dreams for themselves, but they need direction. If a young person says, “I want to be a doctor,” and they’re not taking four years of science, they’ll never be a doctor. If a student is told by their guidance counselor that they don’t need to take the SAT—maybe because it isn’t always required for college admissions any longer, or maybe because the counselor doesn’t think the student is college-ready—they’ll be behind the eight ball when it comes to getting into college, and they’ll miss out on scholarships that use SAT scores to decide who’s eligible. But we don’t have enough professionals in our buildings to help young people understand what they need for their chosen pathways.

The district had been struggling for years because of a prior administration that held us back. We had a culture that wasn't inviting to staff. But we're heading in the right direction now. We're seeing the culture in this district has changed; we've done a 180, and our staff understand that they have autonomy to try things that will lead to growth.

But culture change only goes so far when you're not being properly funded. So much of the district's budget is taken up by basic things. For instance, our district serves a high number of students in poverty. A lot of our kids only eat when they're at school, so these are the kids that we want to wrap our arms around and give them programming after school that includes food to help them get through the evening. Some of our schools have started food pantries. We're also very diverse. Over 40 languages are spoken in our district, and we have a large refugee population. You can come to our elementary schools to see smiling faces from all over the world. But that can be also a challenge, because we have to hire more bilingual teachers and more translators to engage with our non-English-speaking families. Couple those needs with not being adequately funded and you're doing more with less. The state isn't saying, you don't have to educate those students because you don't have enough money to do it. You need to find a way. Our neighboring districts don't have those challenges.

**Figure 14 | Students at Proctor High School in Utica City School District Participate in Athletics**



Source: Photo courtesy of Utica City School District, used with permission.

There are some changes happening in the city now—businesses popping up around our new hospital, a new sports center, hotels downtown, a nanotechnology facility near the city. That development is driving construction, like new luxury lofts downtown. That’s great for growth, but it doesn’t solve the affordable housing problem here. Those homes will be for people who work in the new businesses and can afford it, but they’re not going to be the residents that need it the most. There was a housing project downtown, Washington Courts, that was torn down, and now, there are luxury buildings maybe 200 yards from where those projects were. But the people who were in the projects aren’t living in those lofts. We’ve got high-priced apartments advertised everywhere, but when you’ve still got a significant homelessness situation, it just doesn’t make sense.

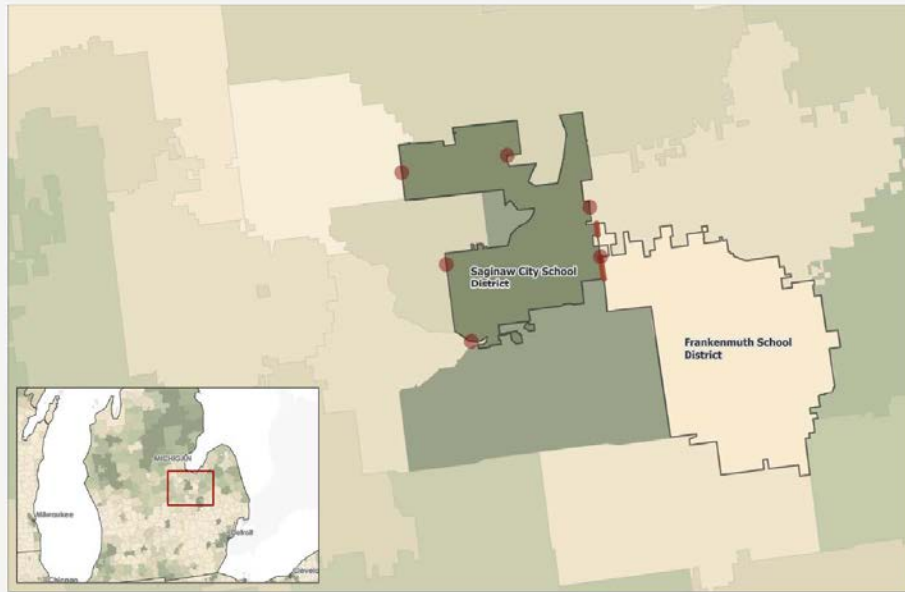
When you look across the city line to New Hartford, you see a lot of former Utica residents. Our children graduate from high school, go away to college, and when they move back to this area, it’s not to the city. They move to surrounding areas like New Hartford and Whitesboro to raise and educate their kids. They don’t move back to the district. And because we were underfunded for so long, folks moved away, and we weren’t replacing the tax base. So, we haven’t looked to raise local taxes. Instead, we filed a lawsuit against the state to fight for fair funding, and we’ve won an increase in aid.<sup>38</sup>

To us, fair funding means that all of our kids get the same chances that children in New Hartford have. It means we can now properly educate our children, and give them field trips and labs and the kinds of things you may not be able to do when you’re underfunded. We’ll increase our test scores, which improves the likelihood that a family moving to this area would choose to live in Utica instead of moving to New Hartford or Clinton or Whitesboro. That will increase our tax base, which in turn helps with the funding.

We’re on the right track now. I think that in the next three or four years, we’ll see an increase in the district’s standing, and I believe we’ll see our funding levels get closer to New Hartford’s. We’ve got some good things on the horizon. We’re not fully there. But we’re definitely getting better.

# Saginaw City School District and Frankenmuth School District, Michigan

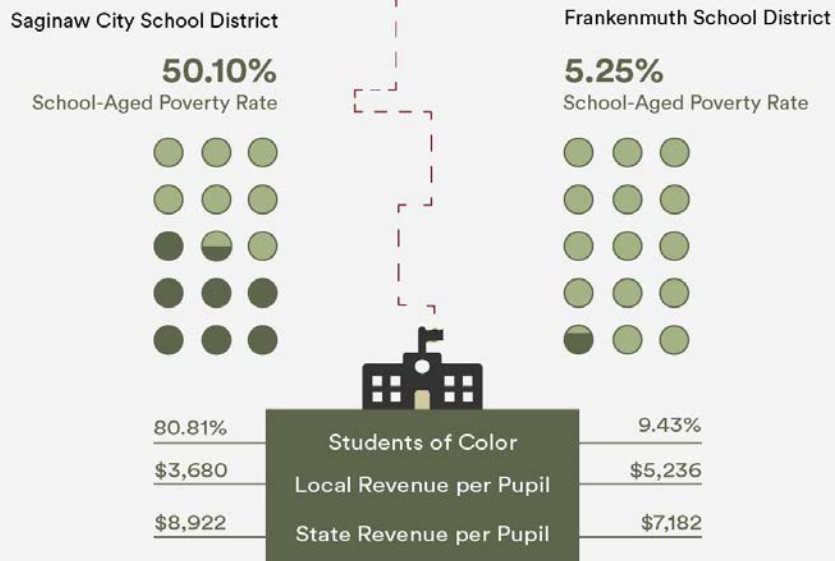
**Figure 15 | Saginaw City School District and Frankenmuth School District**



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Source: Zahava Stadler and Jordan Abbott, *Crossing the Line: Segregation and Resource Inequality Between America's School Districts* (data tool), ArcGIS, February 22, 2024, <https://newamerica.org/crossing-the-line-national-map>.

**Figure 16 | Student Populations and School Funding**



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See note about recent funding changes in Michigan.<sup>39</sup>

Source: New America analysis of 2021 data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) and Annual Survey of School System Finances, and the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics' Common Core of Data (CCD).

The border between Saginaw City and Frankenmuth School Districts is the most segregating in the country by school-aged poverty rate, and Saginaw City has six of the country's 100 most segregating borders by this measure. The district was widened in 2013 to absorb most of Buena Vista,<sup>40</sup> another high-poverty district. Otherwise, the borders of Saginaw City School District have remained largely unchanged over decades. These borders did not always surround an economically troubled community. But as industry in the area has declined, the lines have come to enclose a diminishing tax base and a dwindling number of students and families.

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*The following is by **Julian Morris**, Saginaw City high school student, and **Denita Dorsey**, Julian's mother and Saginaw City alumna, as told to New America. Edited for length and clarity.*

**Denita:**

The landscape of Saginaw has changed drastically since I was a child. I was born here in 1982. At that time, jobs were booming. But when General Motors disinvested from Saginaw, the quality of life declined, because we were a city that had relied heavily on those manufacturing jobs.

Now, we have a generation that doesn't have that same financial security. You see a lot of boarded-up homes and empty lots. You see a lot of liquor stores and dispensaries. You don't see grocery stores in the city—places to get healthy and whole food. You see parks that have been closed. You see a lot more homeless people, and during distributions from the East Side Soup Kitchen or a church giving out food boxes, there are long lines wrapped around corners.

The Saginaw City population has been on a steady decline. When I was young, we had so many elementary schools. Most of those have closed. We had at least seven middle schools. Now we have two, and our two high schools are consolidating into one next year. Kids don't see a booming Saginaw. They don't see what I saw.

There are some new industries opening up. Hemlock Semiconductor is about 20 minutes outside the city. Nexteer Automotive, which is high-tech manufacturing, is closer by. And people from the city of Saginaw do work there, in low-level production jobs. But they don't get the higher-paying skilled jobs or supervisory roles, because they don't have the degree or the technical skills they'd need.

So, there are opportunities here in manufacturing and technology, but they're out of reach. Even at the Saginaw Career Complex, where my son is a student in entrepreneurship—they have courses in those fields, but it's mostly the young white kids enrolled, students from Frankenmuth, Birch Run, and Saginaw Township. Since there is testing and an interview process to get in, the kids who get the training are those whose parents who are already in those careers.

I know that I'm my son's first educator. What he's missing at school, I make sure that he gets at home. But I don't care about just my son. I care about all of the other students. And the quality of the classes is not there. When I was in high school, trigonometry, precalculus, and calculus were all offered. Now, nothing is offered beyond geometry. I asked why there wasn't any higher math anymore, and the teacher told me that it's because they don't have any students to take those courses. They don't have high expectations of the children.

There are many days when I'm dropping Julian off at school and there's hardly anyone there yet. And when I'm picking him up, I see the teachers coming out at the same time as the students. I know COVID took a toll on our educators. Other districts in the area, because they were already fully staffed with certified teachers, could just add additional staff for those students who needed a bit more. In our schools, they may have added one or two academic or behavioral interventionists, but many classrooms were still operating with long-term substitutes instead of certified teachers. It was more of a strain in Saginaw City. And now, with students needing so much coming back from COVID, teachers are tired. They just come to work and they go home. They're not there to run after-school programs, to do clubs, to oversee student government. They just cannot do anything extra.

As a parent, I don't feel like the kids get enough exposure to possibilities for after high school. I believe that sometimes, you need to see something to know you can aspire to it. But our city kids don't know everything that's out there for them, because the people inside the schools are not exposing them to those different routes and careers. They take an interest in the students who are already interested in going that way—students who are in the top 10, or students like Julian, who are intelligent and don't cause any problems. But what about the C-average student? There are college options for them as well, and skilled trade opportunities. But if you're not already a person that they consider to be headed in the direction of college, you get left behind.

**Julian:**

Students in the city are very driven to be successful. They want to max out their opportunities in school. But we don't really get what we need to prepare for college or do well there. We meet the requirements—four years of math, three years of science, a foreign language—but it's just basics, the bare minimum. We do have a guidance counselor, who goes to different classes to go over scholarship options. He'll call students to his office to talk to them about what college they might want to go to, or direct them to another program, like courses at the county Saginaw Career Complex or Delta College. But it isn't too deep—it doesn't give kids an idea of what college will be like and what they can expect, or what colleges are aligned with their goals.

I get a lot of that at home. But many other kids my age don't have that; their parents expect the school to fully prepare them for college, and unfortunately, we don't have schools that truly prepare us to succeed when we go out those doors. So, if they're not being challenged at home, then they won't have what it takes to make it to the next level.

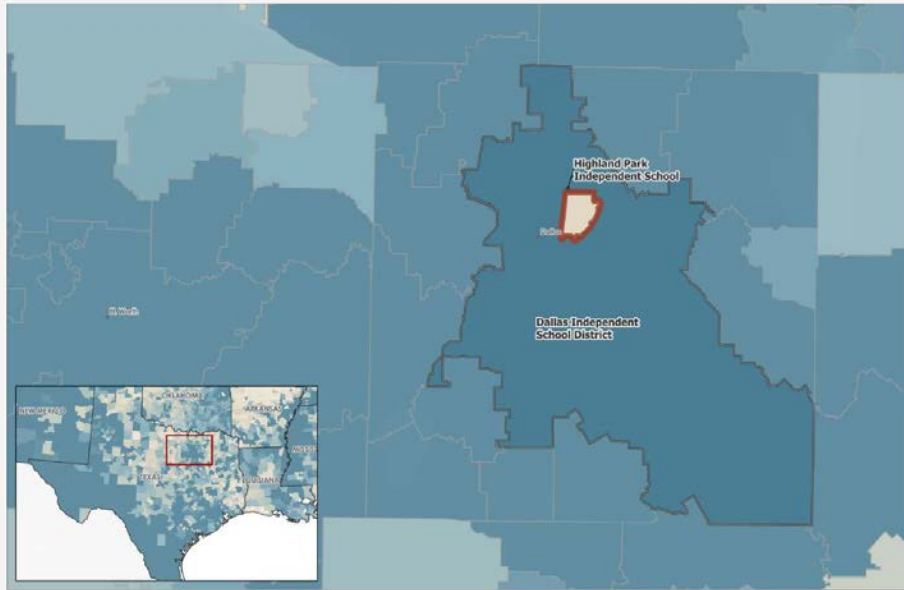
The pandemic was a big change in how we learn. Before COVID, I never used Google Classroom. Nowadays, most of our work is online. I think it's a double-edged sword. It forced our school system to pick up the pace technologically, and it's a lot easier to keep track of the work. But we don't use books, and we can't take our school computers home; they keep them locked up at the school. (They say they don't have the money to replace them if we lose them.) So, they rely on us to have a way to access Google Classroom from home, and a lot of kids aren't doing their work outside of school.

I look at other districts in the area, like Frankenmuth, Davison, and even Saginaw Township Community Schools, which is separate from the city school district. I take classes at the Saginaw Career Complex with students from those schools, and their experience is a lot different. The courses that they have available, their books—they just have more resources to better prepare the students for college.

In conversations among people my age, I hear all the time, “Oh, I can't wait to get out of Saginaw. When I graduate, I'm leaving. I'm never coming back.” The kids are looking at the city and they're not seeing anything worth investing in. They want better for themselves, and they don't believe that Saginaw can give them better. And that's the sad reality. But if the people it raises don't care for it, if everybody wants to leave, how is the city ever supposed to grow?

## Dallas Independent School District and Highland Park Independent School District, Texas

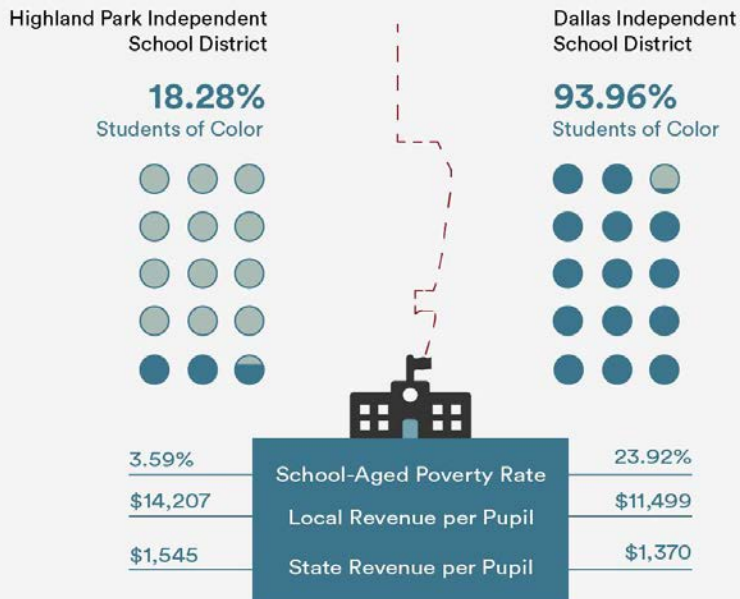
Figure 17 | Dallas Independent School District and Highland Park Independent School District



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Source: Zahava Stadler and Jordan Abbott, *Crossing the Line: Segregation and Resource Inequality Between America's School Districts* (data tool), ArcGIS, February 22, 2024, <https://newamerica.org/crossing-the-line-national-map>.

Figure 18 | Student Populations and School Funding



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Source: New America analysis of 2021 data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) and Annual Survey of School System Finances, and the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics' Common Core of Data (CCD).



After Highland Park incorporated as a town in 1913, it resisted annexation by the city of Dallas for decades.<sup>41</sup> After a final failed attempt in 1945, Dallas instead annexed nearly all the land around Highland Park, leaving it an island within the city. There was one further attempt to bring Highland Park Independent School District (ISD) into the borders of the city school district. In 1975, as part of the federal school desegregation case *Tasby v. Estes*, plaintiffs sought to have Highland Park ISD consolidated with Dallas ISD to help racially integrate the city schools.<sup>42</sup> Because the town was such a small enclave, however, the court found that its operation as a separate school district had not affected Dallas ISD's composition enough for it to be included in Dallas's desegregation plan.

The town's strict zoning and housing rules tightly control what can be built in its small area.<sup>43</sup> Today, the median home value in Highland Park ISD is \$1.45 million, more than seven times the median home value in Dallas ISD. Highland Park ISD receives over \$2,700 more per pupil from local sources than Dallas ISD—a funding advantage that would be far greater if not for Texas's policy of "recapture," which redirects some tax revenue from property-wealthy districts into a state pool for other school systems. Highland Park ISD also receives a substantial amount of money from private fundraising, including through the Highland Park Education Foundation, which raises money that is not subject to the recapture system.<sup>44</sup>

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*The following is by **Lakashia Wallace and Robbie Esteban**, Dallas Independent School District parents and advocates, as told to New America. Edited for length and clarity.*

Dallas is a divided city. Highland Park is one of the most expensive zip codes you can imagine. But you can drive five miles north or south and you will find some of the poorest areas in our city. That impacts our schools, communities, and the relationships we can build. We're very much divided by income, race, status, and education. The quality of education in Highland Park looks a lot different than in Dallas schools around the corner.

If we were to put kids from different neighborhoods in Dallas, from different wealth levels and backgrounds, in the same room, the kids that would often be the most well-spoken, responsible, and emotionally mature would not necessarily be the children who score the highest on tests or whose families have the most money. But when we talk about the quality of education and who we assume is most capable, we are making it a whole lot harder for kids in neighborhoods that have less money—not because of the money, but because of the level of stress on campus, and the level of stress of the adults in the room. We have some exceptional and very qualified teachers in our public schools. Unfortunately, they have to deal with so much more than just teaching a kid how to read, write, and do math. As a result, too many walk away from education entirely, further diminishing the public school system.

As a parent, one of us, Ms. Wallace has had her own children experience a lack of certified teachers in critical core classes, sometimes being taught by long-term substitutes for years. Students have described not learning about science or math, but completing worksheets on unrelated subject matter instead of building college readiness.

We're also deeply concerned about how rules are enforced in this district, especially for our students of color. One of us, Robbie, was once leading a discussion with students from different high schools: a wealthy private school, a magnet school, and an under-resourced district school. They were asked, "What is the dress code on your campus, and how is it enforced?" The students from the private school said they weren't sure they had a dress code policy, but if they did, there was an elected board of their peers that decided how to handle any violations. The kids from the magnet school said they did have a uniform, but if they ever didn't have the clothes they needed, they could go to the counselor's office. And the kids from the under-resourced school said, "We get an in-school suspension for wearing the wrong color socks."

Robbie said the students came to their own conclusions about how what they had been led to believe about "good schools vs. bad schools" and "good kids vs. bad kids" was simply not true. She shared that one student said, "We keep hearing about all of the behavior issues at your school, but if the color of your socks is part of that, I don't know what to think. I don't have to think about my socks at all."

We've heard public school teachers tell us that when a student breaks rules by ordering food from a delivery app, they'll take and dispose of the food, directly in front of the students. Kids have been suspended in school for minimal reasons, like being out of uniform compliance—that is, they're showing up to school to take part in the educational process just wearing what clean clothes they may have instead of a uniform. It's unfortunate, but many of our parents live paycheck to paycheck. Imagine a single mother with five kids attending school, unable to afford to wash 20 shirts and pants every week, only to see her child get punished as a result.

We've even seen students physically assaulted, thrown against the walls and lockers by administrative staff. Our expectation as parents is that that staff would be in a position to be understanding and capable of responding to the crisis. But instead, what we're doing to kids in under-resourced communities is policing them wildly differently. We are placing additional barriers in the way of students who are burdened by situations out of their control. Students face real challenges in our community. If they need help, supporting them should be the main focus.

There are some really high-quality programs in the district now. People were fleeing public schools 20 years ago, but within the last decade, Dallas ISD has created options that parents feel are very competitive with those in other school districts. The reality is, though, many students are not gaining access to those schools, so not all students benefit and those solutions, which are often short-lived, create more chaos than support. Charter schools are part of the issue; with great marketing departments, they seem like a solution for families, but once they get there they realize that many of the schools are failing campuses and, worse yet, there is no mechanism for accountability because charter schools are run by companies, not a public institution.

Also a Dallas ISD parent, Robbie had a child at Townview Magnet Center, which houses six schools on one campus. But even there, you would see relatively few white students in any of the schools, other than the School for the Talented & Gifted. And parents in District 9, where Ms. Wallace lives, are asking why so few of the Black and brown students from their middle school are getting into the magnets and specialty schools. There are also non-magnet schools that specialize in law or medicine, and there are neighborhood schools that have developed strong programs—the quality is there. But in District 9, some schools have special programs that are struggling. Lincoln High School has a communications program that for many years was award-winning. Over the years, the program has been overlooked. We know how important communications careers are right now. Why hasn't the district resourced that program in that community to be successful? How do we even the playing field, when everything we build is taken away?

And while we push to have Dallas ISD do better for students of color, Highland Park remains a world apart. When Ms. Wallace was growing up here, Black people were warned against driving through or in Highland Park for fear of being stopped by the police. Many people of color just avoided the community altogether, out of trepidation. In retrospect, race and money were the two most important factors pertaining to Highland Park. The assumption was their kids would go to the best schools and get whatever they needed or wanted. It's gotten a lot better—it's not what it used to be—but the income disparity is still there. Let's be honest: Whether in Dallas ISD or in Highland Park, all parents share a common denominator—to strive to provide the best for our kids, whether that's by way of education, opportunities, finances, or family. The difference isn't the goal. But the truth is, the educational experience looks very different in most of Dallas ISD than Highland Park, and that's due to the power of money.

## Wahluke School District and Kittitas School District, Washington

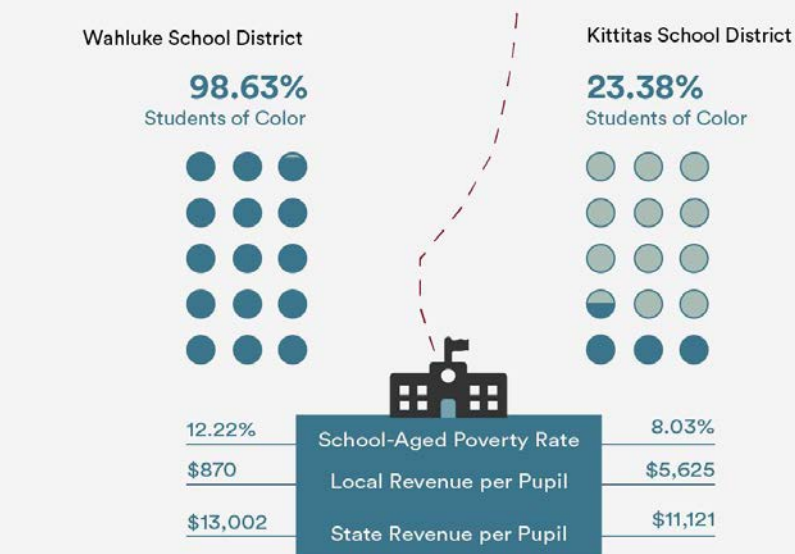
Figure 19 | Wahluke School District and Kittitas School District



NEW AMERICA

Source: Zahava Stadler and Jordan Abbott, *Crossing the Line: Segregation and Resource Inequality Between America's School Districts* (data tool), ArcGIS, February 22, 2024, <https://newamerica.org/crossing-the-line-national-map>.

Figure 20 | Student Populations and School Funding



NEW AMERICA

Source: New America analysis of 2021 data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) and Annual Survey of School System Finances, and the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics' Common Core of Data (CCD).

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*The following is by administrators of Wahluke School District (**Amy Marlow**, assistant superintendent; **Gigi Calaway**, director of student support services; **LaDonna Fogle**, director of special education; and **Bethany Martinez**, director of migrant and multilingual services), as told to New America. Edited for length and clarity.*

In the Wahluke School District, we like to say that we're an hour from everywhere. Being rural and remote shapes everything about our district.

First, many of our students come from families who have come to this area, and this country, to work in agriculture. Some families have been here for three or four generations, while others are newcomers. Fifty-two percent of our kids receive English language development services and are formally identified as multilingual learners, but really, over 90 percent speak Spanish at home. That multilingualism is a huge asset to our community. Many of our students from Mexico speak Mixteco, and we have recently had families arriving from Guatemala who speak Q'anjob'al. Those new dialects are a challenge for us; we don't have a lot of employees who can provide translation services, so we've been working on that this year to better engage with all of our families.

Our parents are amazing. They want the best for their kids, and a lot of them came here so that their children could have a better education. Fifty-nine percent of our students are migratory. Years ago, our class sizes were cut in half in winter months. Now, fewer families leave during winter; they move during the summer harvest instead. Those winter months are hard for them, but parents make the choice not to disrupt their kids' schooling. Fourteen percent of our students are legally considered homeless; we don't have shelters here, but we have a lot of families that double or triple up in a home, because there just isn't a lot of adequate housing.

Because our community is so small and isolated, we don't have a lot of services in the area—no Boys and Girls Club or YMCA—so our schools are the hub for everything, and families tend to come to the school for help before looking to outside providers. We also have to think about what will be available for our students after graduation. There isn't any transition support or job coaching for adults with special needs, so our program has to fully prepare our students with disabilities for life after school. We support everyone as best we can. Our McKinney-Vento liaison works year-round connecting families to food assistance and mental and physical health resources. All of our staff function as informal social workers to some degree. We say that we don't have full plates here—we have full platters. There is a lot of turnover, because our teachers are burned out doing so much more than just teaching.

**Figure 21 | Wahluke Elementary School Students and Their Teacher in the School Library**



Source: Photo courtesy of Wahluke School District, used with permission.

Because of our location, we have trouble filling licensed roles like nurses, psychologists, or mental health counselors. And when we do hire those professionals, if they don't already live in the community, they often don't want to stay, so we have to pay especially high salaries. Finding special education providers is a particular challenge; we just can't get applied behavior analysis professionals to come to our campuses, for instance. Speech and occupational therapy are all virtual, and that means paying not only the therapist, but also an on-site paraprofessional to help the student actually do the exercises.

Another big factor in our budget is transportation. The geographic area for our schools spans 30 miles, and gas is expensive here. We also can't expect families to have reliable cars or the time to bring students to extracurricular activities, so we provide transportation for everything—sports, career events, Future Farmers of America fairs. We go to competitions and Wahluke is the only district there with a bus; everyone else is there with parents. And unlike Kittitas, which can sell tickets to football games to pay for uniforms and equipment, we don't charge families for anything, so it always comes back to the district. It's a little over \$3 a mile for the bus and \$36 per hour for drivers. We've had to start saying no to some events because we just can't afford to send our students. Two of our robotics program students were invited to nationals and we had to turn it down.

It's hard when we have to ask our students to forgo an opportunity, but funding is tight. Many of our property taxpayers feel disengaged from the district. That includes farm owners, many of whom don't live locally, and the community around the Desert Aire Golf Club, where a lot of people have second homes or are retirees on a fixed income. That disconnection really matters in Washington State, where all local property taxes for schools have to be voter-approved; our last levy election failed by 36 votes. Federal funding has also been a challenge. Many of our families are undocumented and were fearful of filling out the census, so the new data doesn't really reflect our population. Our federal funding for low-income students has gone down because our poverty rate is artificially low, and we recently lost our Rural and Low-Income Schools funding. We try to get as many grants as we can, but they don't go up along with the cost of living, and we have to pay our staff a living wage. As a result, we had to cut 27 positions this past year.

As district parents, we've felt that sting. If our kids had gone to school in Kittitas or Richland, it would have been a different experience. They know they didn't have the choice of courses that they could have had in other schools. We will never have the music or theater programs that other communities have, in part because of the number of locals able to volunteer—our small community is so overstretched. But we're doing our best for our kids, because they deserve the best. The good thing about a small town is we take care of each other. You see those who don't have much giving that little bit just to help somebody else out. And that community is a huge asset.

## Divided Districts and Native Students

The data used for this report do not include districts where either 75 percent or more of the students are Native or where at least 75 percent of the geographic area overlaps with reservation land. This is not because the challenges faced by Native students are unimportant—far from it—but because the nature of demographic divides and school funding inequalities are so distinct in Native communities.

With respect to school funding, the land dispossession of Native peoples and tribal ownership of reservation land create unique relationships with property generally and property taxation in particular; school finance in districts on tribal land simply cannot be built on the same foundation of local revenue that exists in nearly every other school district. Federal funding also looms far larger in school districts educating many Native students than it does in most other districts, changing the overall picture.

With respect to student demographics, though the National Center for Education Statistics considers “American Indian/Alaska Native” to be a racial or ethnic category,<sup>45</sup> Native students belong not just to a defined racial group, but to their own sovereign nations. Educational self-determination is both an exercise of that sovereignty and an important corrective to America’s long history of anti-Native education policies, including the banning of Native languages in schools and the forcible placement of Native children in assimilationist schools where Native culture was erased and they were often subject to abuse.<sup>46</sup> Given this context, it is important to understand the ways in which racial integration carries different implications for Native communities than for other student populations.

**Figure 22 | A Native Student and Teacher Reading Together at Theodore Jamerson Elementary School**

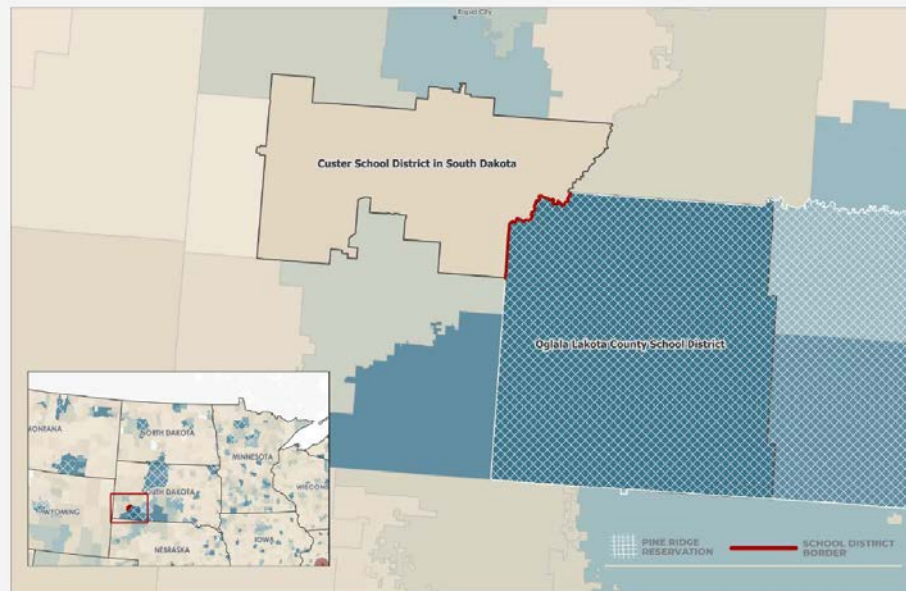


Source: *Photo courtesy of National Indian Education Association, used with permission.*



## Oglala Lakota County School District and Custer School District, South Dakota

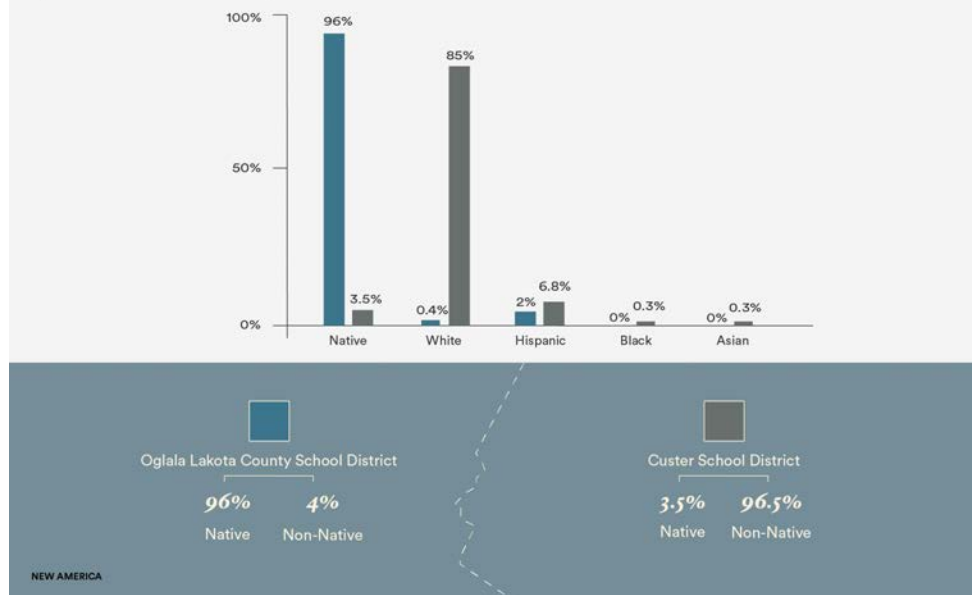
Figure 23 | Oglala Lakota County School District and Custer School District



NEW AMERICA

Source: Zahava Stadler and Jordan Abbott, *Crossing the Line: Segregation and Resource Inequality Between America's School Districts* (data tool), ArcGIS, February 22, 2024, <https://newamerica.org/crossing-the-line-national-map>.

Figure 24 | District Enrollment by Race and Native Status



Source: New America analysis of 2021 data from the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics' Common Core of Data (CCD).

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*The following is by **Diana Cournoyer**, Executive Director of the National Indian Education Association.*

Public academic and finance data present the story that Oglala Lakota County Schools (OLCS) are among the highest-funded in South Dakota, but one of the lowest-performing. It is time for critical dialogue about this story. The equity challenges of remoteness and rurality intersect here at a depth that resurfaces a call for civil rights. As a member of this community, I know to look beyond the initial interpretation of the data. Our nominally high levels of funding do not ensure our children a rich education.

My community holds the juxtaposition of a dark political history and a rich ancestral culture. I am a citizen of Oglala Lakota Nation, and an educator and national advocate. My identity is steeped in the culture and language of my people, but my professional background reflects the practices of westernized education. I dream of a day that Oglala Lakota students can learn in a system that reflects the values, language, and identity of our people, with an emphasis on growing our tribal economy. We are a strong people who are working to reclaim education sovereignty and the future of our kids. However, my community holds the scars of a traumatic history; our homelands were taken and we were confined to a reservation. Boarding schools attempted to take away our language and culture through stripping our children's identities. The right to teach our children our ways was gone, and in its place—a colonized education system that has failed us.

On the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, our parents have a range of school choices. The perspectives of families regarding these choices are shaped by historical context, cultural factors, and socioeconomic considerations.

If you visit Pine Ridge, you will find that our schools become the center of each community. Often, the school buildings are the most updated or welcoming structure in the area. Our people depend on the schools, though the difficulty finding jobs on the reservation also decreases the motivation to graduate. Across the reservation, students can choose among a Bureau of Indian Education (BIE)-operated school, six tribal grant schools, the Oglala Lakota County School district (six schools throughout the reservation), and three border public schools from outside districts, as well as two parochial schools and three private schools. About 6,000 Native students are enrolled across these institutions, ranging from pre-K to 12th grade. Many of the Native students attend one of the six tribal grant schools. An estimated 1,800 attend OLCS.

Pine Ridge's multiple school systems each have their own leadership structure, funding formula, and data management system. Students typically hop between schools searching for a stronger cultural environment, better academic options, or easier access by transportation. The schools vary in their degrees of cultural programming, quality of instruction, community engagement, and consistency of leadership. Rarely do these systems share data to produce a more accurate story of graduation rates and academic progress. The lack of data sharing also impedes efforts to improve learning systems and share resources.

Our reservation faces unique educational challenges, including limited resources, historical trauma, and cultural and language preservation concerns. The reservation land base is the size of Connecticut and is rural and remote. Even though OLCS receives more funding than surrounding districts, the limited economic resources on the reservation means access to culturally supportive and sustaining instruction and student services are slim. And when district partners can muster offerings like after-school programs, often families do not have the transportation or the ability to drive over an hour for services.

As an advocate for Native education nationally and as a member of this community, I know that more funding does not automatically translate into more access. The OLCS's school funding presents numerous complexities that can significantly impact education outcomes. When there is little funding from local property taxes but a heavy reliance on federal and state funding, money is much less flexible. The complexities and restrictions of state and, especially, federal funding, combined with the limited access to services in our community, enhance and even perpetuate the disparities between the districts. It is difficult for the schools to understand and navigate the complex allocation process, and federal and state regulations and reporting requirements create barriers and administrative burdens. The school district is limited in how it can use funds to address the unique needs of Native students, which results in inequitable access to opportunities.

The data sources relied on for this report show disparities between the student populations of OLCS, on the reservation, and Custer Schools District (CSD), which is off-reservation but borders it. We can take a closer look at two schools that are just across the northwest reservation border from each other. Red Shirt Table School, an OLCS school, serves primarily Native students, while CSD schools are majority-white. In other communities, such a divide might be viewed as an equity issue, but in fact, this the result of Pine Ridge community preferences. The border of Pine Ridge is more than a district border; it is a political border, separating one nation from another.

Despite the infrastructure and facilities challenges or limited extracurricular activities, Native students at Red Shirt have access to culture and language support, the safety of Native peers and some Native teachers, and the support of the local community. Across the political border, Native students attending CSD may have nicer facilities and more advanced technology, but they would not be in a school environment that reflects or values their Native culture. They would be isolated, away from the protection of their family and tribal leadership. They would be more likely to encounter racism and stereotyping, making them less comfortable with expressing their Native identity. This paradox is still at heart an equity issue.

But the issue is more than funding. The issue is education sovereignty. Like many Native American communities, the Oglala Lakota Nation has long advocated for greater control over education within our reservation. This push for sovereignty led to establishing the tribal education codes that govern many of the schools on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. The political and cultural history of Oglala Lakota County Schools being public on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation reflects a complex journey of tribal sovereignty, educational autonomy, and advocacy for culturally relevant education.

## A Future Not Determined by the Past

The stories shared in this report, and many others like them in communities whose borders are identified in our findings, are not inevitable. They are the product of government actions. These include choices over decades to support white residents and homebuyers while hampering and excluding those of other races, shaping America into a patchwork of divided and unequal neighborhoods, and decisions about the placement of school district boundaries against this segregated backdrop. State governments have opted to build school finance systems on a foundation of local property tax revenues, linking school budgets to local wealth levels. They've also given wealthy school districts in nearly every state the legal ability to raise vast amounts of extra local revenue, creating unreachable targets for lower-wealth districts. Taken together, these policies have segregated school districts and tilted the school funding system in favor of property-wealthy districts, which are frequently those serving communities with lower poverty rates and fewer students of color.

That state laws allow this ground-level inequality creates a new problem. In order to address the imbalance, state lawmakers must allocate ever more state aid to fill local gaps. Often, they cannot keep up. Even as states provide more money to higher-need districts, deep local revenue disparities mean that students of color and students in poverty wind up with less school funding overall. The failure to address local revenue inequality at the source sets states up to fail, overwhelming their efforts to allocate education aid fairly and well.

To allow students to learn in diverse school systems whose funding levels match student need, not local property values, states must address interdistrict divides at the source. The specific policies needed will depend on the particular state and the nature of its problems, but certain general policy concepts should be part of the approach. One option is to draw school district boundaries to purposefully include heterogeneous student communities and larger, more economically mixed areas. Another is to eliminate or reduce the role of local property taxes in the school finance system, such as by levying all education taxes (including any property taxes) at the state level, or by pooling local property tax revenues across multiple districts so that the budgetary benefits of property wealth are shared among communities that have historically had different levels of access to housing markets. If local property taxes are to remain a significant source of school funding, guardrails should be put in place to ensure that communities of different wealth levels pay their fair share toward school funding totals—no more and no less—and that local funds are appropriately constrained, to limit the kind of extravagant spending in high-wealth districts that creates ground-level inequality.

Consider what such policies could mean for the communities whose stories are highlighted in this report.

The quality of students' education in Saginaw City depends on the health of the economy in a narrowly drawn local area. As local opportunities have dwindled, residents have left the city and the tax base has declined, which has resulted in less local education funding and a series of school closures. But Saginaw City School District is not geographically isolated. It immediately borders seven school districts that are much better off, and it is already partnered with the other school systems in its county in a limited way, because students from all county school districts can attend the Saginaw Career Complex. Imagine if the boundaries of the school district were widened to encompass not just the declining city, but some of its better-off neighbors as well, and perhaps all districts in the county. This would broaden and stabilize the district tax base, bolster enrollment while diversifying the student body, and free the district from its downward spiral.

Utica City School District, too, is closely bound to the economy of its city, and the city is bound to the fortunes of the district. Parts of the city still echo the descriptions and divisions of its 1936 redlining map, and some neighborhoods are full of rental housing and limited in the taxes they yield for the district. Many area parents, including some who grew up in Utica, choose to live and educate their children in nearby districts instead of in the city proper, further reducing the local homeownership rate and property tax base. Despite early signs of an economic upturn, Utica is in no position to match New Hartford's property tax receipts. Instead, it has relied on state aid to narrow—though not close—the funding disparity, even going so far as to sue the state for greater support. Since local property tax revenue looms so large in New York school finance, the state must play a constant game of catch-up, attempting to fill ever-widening local gaps with state revenue. If New York instead worked to cut the tie between local wealth levels and school funding by widening district boundaries, limiting the amount of local property tax revenue in the school finance system, or even collecting property tax dollars for education at the state level, it would be better able to fund districts like Utica in a way commensurate with their students' needs.

Dallas Independent School District (ISD and Highland Park ISD) are already subject to a policy for pooling some property tax dollars across district lines, since Texas's recapture system sends a portion of excess revenues from high-priced neighborhoods like Highland Park to a state fund that is used to support other districts. This policy should be credited for the fact that the funding disparity between Dallas ISD and Highland Park ISD remains moderate despite the districts' huge divides in home values. But Highland Park still maintains its discrete school district in the middle of Dallas, creating a predominately white

island in the middle of a city district that serves almost exclusively students of color. This separation is only the starkest split in the midst of a divided city, which falls well short of the ideal of integration in its treatment of students from different backgrounds. Nationally, school district borders serve to define both student populations and tax bases; Texas’s policy lets some funding cross district lines, but when it comes to students, the state allows Highland Park ISD’s walls to remain up.

Not all cases of interdistrict racial segregation are as hyperlocal as that between Dallas and Highland Park, however. Wahluke School District, geographically isolated and composed almost entirely of students of one racial group, would be hard-pressed to achieve greater integration. The predominately white Kittitas School District may border Wahluke, but their schools are miles apart. Even if the districts were formally joined, it is unlikely that students would be transported so far as to make individual campuses more diverse. Instead, Wahluke must focus on serving its students well within the confines of its borders. But because Washington affords local voters power over whether or not to levy school taxes, and because the interests of area taxpayers so diverge from those of local students and families, the district struggles to raise enough in funding to cover its considerable expenses. By allowing local property tax dollars to play a role in the school funding system but forcing districts to turn to voters to approve every levy, the state has created a steep financial challenge for high-need, rural districts like Wahluke. If Washington better governed its local dollars to ensure that property owners paid their fair share, these districts would be in a far more secure position.

The specifics of these cases are different. But they exist as facets of a single problem: the building of school districts, and school district finances, atop a divided and unequal foundation. The redlined neighborhoods of the past have produced redlined schools—and school budgets—in the present.

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**“The redlined neighborhoods of the past have produced redlined schools—and school budgets—in the present.”**

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States need not continue to make policy choices that entrench these deep interdistrict divides. There are better options: for more inclusive district maps, more equitable and sensible approaches to raising school revenues, and funding systems that support students based on their needs, not their communities’ wealth. For too many years, students have had their educations defined by geographies of exclusion and difference. It’s time to draw the line.

# Appendix A: 100 Most Segregating School District Borders by Difference in Poverty Rate

Rank	State	High-Poverty District	Low-Poverty District	Difference in School-Aged Poverty Rate (Percentage Points)	Difference in Revenue (State + Local)*	High-Poverty District			Low-Poverty District		
						Enrollment	School-Aged Poverty Rate	Percent Students of Color	Enrollment	School-Aged Poverty Rate	Percent Students of Color
1	Michigan	Saginaw City School District	Frankenmuth School District	44.85	184.66	5,179	50.10%	80.81%	1,362	5.25%	9.43%
2	Ohio	Youngstown City School District	Canfield Local School District	43.46	8,612.05	4,879	49.16%	86.31%	2,515	5.70%	11.10%
3	Michigan	Saginaw City School District	Freeland Community School District	42.05	2,174.93	5,179	50.10%	80.81%	2,014	8.05%	9.96%
4	Ohio	Youngstown City School District	Poland Local School District	41.71	7,907.53	4,879	49.16%	86.31%	1,710	7.45%	8.28%
5	Alabama	Birmingham City School District	Mountain Brook City School District	37.38	-5,266.88	21,597	41.11%	98.90%	4,441	3.73%	6.31%
6	Alabama	Birmingham City School District	Vestavia Hills City School District	37.33	-2,115.60	21,597	41.11%	98.90%	7,087	3.78%	18.45%
7	Michigan	Saginaw City School District	Reese Public Schools	37.27	-24.73	5,179	50.10%	80.81%	751	12.82%	13.82%
8	Michigan	Saginaw City School District	Swan Valley School District	37.22	698.38	5,179	50.10%	80.81%	1,824	12.88%	22.47%
9	Ohio	Youngstown City School District	Hubbard Exempted Village School District	36.40	8,429.90	4,879	49.16%	86.31%	1,872	12.76%	11.93%
10	Alabama	Birmingham City School District	Trussville City School District	36.12	-1,920.47	21,597	41.11%	98.90%	4,816	4.99%	22.97%
11	Michigan	Benton Harbor Area Schools	St. Joseph Public Schools	35.60	1,529.77	1,613	41.05%	98.34%	2,963	5.45%	24.10%
12	Alabama	Bessemer City School District	Hoover City School District	35.05	-2,407.87	3,318	43.01%	97.86%	13,640	7.96%	45.06%
13	Pennsylvania	Clairton City School District	West Jefferson Hills School District	35.04	854.05	796	41.12%	81.98%	3,199	6.07%	13.79%
14	Michigan	Saginaw City School District	Saginaw Township Community Schools	34.63	843.59	5,179	50.10%	80.81%	4,694	15.47%	45.63%
15	Michigan	Detroit Public Schools Community District	Grosse Pointe Public Schools	34.57	-4,813.19	48,782	40.19%	97.49%	6,919	5.62%	26.04%
16	Michigan	Saginaw City School District	Bay City School District	34.29	971.89	5,179	50.10%	80.81%	6,875	15.81%	22.71%
17	New York	Rochester City School District	Penfield Central School District	34.20	5,029.50	24,898	38.89%	90.85%	4,506	4.69%	18.81%
18	Alabama	Greene County School District	Tuscaloosa County School District	33.82	3,231.95	953	49.01%	100.00%	18,766	15.19%	43.61%
19	Alabama	Bullock County School District	Pike Road City School District	33.75	1,188.68	1,434	42.54%	98.48%	2,478	8.79%	45.13%
20	Ohio	Cleveland Municipal School District	Cuyahoga Heights Local School District	33.71	-3,229.07	34,941	39.12%	85.52%	832	5.41%	14.27%
21	Florida	Putnam County School District	St. Johns County School District	33.23	-2,044.96	10,319	39.05%	48.07%	44,550	5.82%	28.50%
22	Ohio	Youngstown City School District	Lowellville Local School District	33.17	7,598.39	4,879	49.16%	86.31%	467	15.99%	14.07%
23	Alabama	Birmingham City School District	Hoover City School District	33.15	-1,773.58	21,597	41.11%	98.90%	13,640	7.96%	45.06%
24	Pennsylvania	Greater Johnstown School District	Richland School District	33.14	-321.01	2,881	41.84%	62.47%	1,473	8.71%	10.71%
25	Ohio	Lockland Local School District	Wyoming City School District	32.99	-1,528.79	537	36.88%	72.83%	1,930	3.89%	23.89%
26	New York	Rochester City School District	Brighton Central School District	32.97	3,712.58	24,898	38.89%	90.85%	3,417	5.93%	33.69%
27	Alabama	Birmingham City School District	Homewood City School District	32.73	-3,321.62	21,597	41.11%	98.90%	4,200	8.38%	32.22%
28	Massachusetts	Springfield School District	Longmeadow School District	32.58	-1,802.82	24,239	37.30%	91.28%	2,751	4.72%	24.72%
29	Alabama	Birmingham City School District	Shelby County School District	32.34	527.77	21,597	41.11%	98.90%	20,438	8.77%	31.67%
30	Ohio	Dayton City School District	Oakwood City School District	32.30	305.77	11,721	35.31%	77.78%	2,005	3.01%	17.83%
31	Louisiana	Concordia Parish School District	West Feliciana Parish School District	32.17	-6,152.92	3,261	49.43%	52.19%	2,132	17.26%	40.73%
32	Pennsylvania	Greater Johnstown School District	Central Cambria School District	32.14	-772.34	2,881	41.84%	62.47%	1,574	9.70%	3.88%
33	Ohio	Youngstown City School District	Austintown Local School District	31.15	8,566.33	4,879	49.16%	86.31%	4,133	18.01%	27.87%



Rank	State	High-Poverty District	Low-Poverty District	Difference in School-Aged Poverty Rate (Percentage Points)	Difference in Revenue (State + Local)*	High-Poverty District			Low-Poverty District		
						Enrollment	School-Aged Poverty Rate	Percent Students of Color	Enrollment	School-Aged Poverty Rate	Percent Students of Color
34	Texas	Edgewood Independent School District	Lackland Independent School District	31.14	-2,396.74	9,152	36.89%	99.33%	890	5.75%	54.01%
35	Pennsylvania	Chester-Upland School District	Wallingford-Swarthmore School District	31.03	945.85	2,621	35.25%	98.27%	3,756	4.22%	25.99%
36	New York	East Ramapo Central School District (Spring Valley)	Clarkstown Central School District	30.83	-4,164.46	9,469	35.78%	95.80%	7,775	4.96%	47.14%
37	Illinois	Pleasant Valley School District 62	Limestone Walters Community Consolidated School District 316	30.66	2,814.05	451	38.48%	67.49%	201	7.82%	9.64%
38	New York	East Ramapo Central School District (Spring Valley)	Pearl River Union Free School District	30.55	-6,480.73	9,469	35.78%	95.80%	2,416	5.24%	25.49%
39	Ohio	Dayton City School District	Beavercreek City School District	30.49	3,505.69	11,721	35.31%	77.78%	7,818	4.82%	19.64%
40	New York	Syracuse City School District	Westhill Central School District	30.39	985.79	19,148	37.84%	78.52%	1,720	7.45%	18.65%
41	Ohio	Youngstown City School District	Boardman Local School District	30.38	7,530.13	4,879	49.16%	86.31%	3,804	18.78%	28.77%
42	Pennsylvania	Greater Johnstown School District	Westmont Hilltop School District	30.35	15.61	2,881	41.84%	62.47%	1,482	11.50%	15.47%
43	Pennsylvania	Greater Johnstown School District	Conemaugh Township Area School District	30.23	-1,538.80	2,881	41.84%	62.47%	873	11.62%	3.98%
44	Kentucky	Covington Independent School District	Campbell County School District	30.19	721.84	3,796	39.72%	63.63%	5,043	9.53%	10.67%
45	Georgia	Talbot County School District	Harris County School District	30.18	5,389.76	462	39.08%	89.21%	5,486	8.90%	27.04%
46	Ohio	Cleveland Municipal School District	Fairview Park City School District	30.13	-27.25	34,941	39.12%	85.52%	1,580	9.00%	14.18%
47	Massachusetts	Springfield School District	Hampden-Wilbraham School District	30.10	-2,493.60	24,239	37.30%	91.28%	2,865	7.20%	17.54%
48	Kentucky	Covington Independent School District	Kenton County School District	30.06	1,793.18	3,796	39.72%	63.63%	14,021	9.67%	17.05%
49	Mississippi	Jackson Public School District	Madison County School District	30.01	-1,074.45	20,401	40.06%	98.66%	12,988	10.05%	52.74%
50	Mississippi	Sunflower County Consolidated School District	Leland School District	29.97	-105.78	3,149	60.47%	97.94%	763	30.50%	95.99%
51	Ohio	Youngstown City School District	Liberty Local School District	29.96	6,380.25	4,879	49.16%	86.31%	1,249	19.20%	55.88%
52	New Jersey	Camden City School District	Haddon Township School District	29.81	21,634.60	7,553	36.72%	99.18%	2,000	6.90%	20.49%
53	Massachusetts	Springfield School District	East Longmeadow School District	29.59	-2,639.18	24,239	37.30%	91.28%	2,404	7.72%	23.84%
54	Missouri	St. Louis City School District	Webster Groves School District	29.54	2,194.30	19,299	33.40%	87.49%	4,409	3.87%	22.00%
55	Ohio	Warren City School District	Lakeview Local School District	29.52	4,083.19	4,416	39.37%	60.84%	1,524	9.85%	6.91%
56	Illinois	East St. Louis School District 189	Collinsville Community Unit School District 10	29.43	9,268.16	5,004	45.07%	98.79%	6,083	15.64%	46.09%
57	Michigan	Detroit Public Schools Community District	Ferndale Public Schools	29.34	-1,863.60	48,782	40.19%	97.49%	2,975	10.85%	71.49%
58	Illinois	Hazel Crest School District 152-5	Homewood School District 153	29.32	5,998.84	897	40.66%	99.32%	1,893	11.34%	76.06%
59	New Jersey	Seaside Heights Borough School District	Berkeley Township School District	29.24	5,407.33	222	41.38%	69.95%	2,370	12.14%	31.70%
60	Mississippi	Tunica County School District	DeSoto County School District	29.11	4,521.92	1,776	41.78%	98.86%	34,067	12.67%	55.68%
61	Missouri	St. Louis City School District	Clayton School District	29.09	-11,856.88	19,299	33.40%	87.49%	2,514	4.32%	37.36%
62	Ohio	Northridge Local School District	Vandalia-Butler City School District	29.05	2,662.75	1,555	40.55%	44.45%	2,802	11.50%	23.68%
63	Ohio	Cincinnati City School District	Madeira City School District	29.00	861.47	34,635	32.20%	78.90%	1,596	3.20%	14.23%

Rank	State	High-Poverty District	Low-Poverty District	Difference in School-Aged Poverty Rate (Percentage Points)	Difference in Revenue (State + Local)*	High-Poverty District			Low-Poverty District		
						Enrollment	School-Aged Poverty Rate	Percent Students of Color	Enrollment	School-Aged Poverty Rate	Percent Students of Color
64	New York	Syracuse City School District	Jamesville-DeWitt Central School District	28.98	918.32	19,148	37.84%	78.52%	2,620	8.86%	27.36%
65	Texas	San Antonio Independent School District	Fort Sam Houston Independent School District	28.66	2,531.21	45,802	34.04%	96.92%	1,501	5.38%	60.34%
66	Pennsylvania	Philadelphia City School District	Haverford Township School District	28.65	-917.50	124,111	32.11%	85.57%	6,563	3.46%	19.86%
67	Ohio	Cleveland Municipal School District	Shaker Heights City School District	28.61	-6,175.78	34,941	39.12%	85.52%	4,684	10.51%	61.10%
68	Ohio	Toledo City School District	Perrysburg Exempted Village School District	28.60	-629.71	22,312	32.47%	71.16%	5,264	3.86%	20.23%
69	New Jersey	Atlantic City School District	Egg Harbor Township School District	28.47	5,760.08	6,553	42.95%	96.13%	7,175	14.48%	57.71%
70	New York	Rochester City School District	West Irondequoit Central School District	28.46	8,070.02	24,898	38.89%	90.85%	3,621	10.43%	30.96%
71	Ohio	Cincinnati City School District	Wyoming City School District	28.31	-307.69	34,635	32.20%	78.90%	1,930	3.89%	23.89%
72	New Jersey	Woodbine Borough School District	Upper Township School District	28.26	1,721.44	215	33.83%	76.82%	1,355	5.57%	7.83%
73	Oklahoma	Western Heights Public Schools	Mustang Public Schools	28.24	4,852.70	2,729	35.85%	85.44%	11,868	7.61%	41.73%
74	Georgia	Spalding County School District	Fayette County School District	28.19	-1,693.49	9,667	35.53%	67.73%	19,912	7.34%	56.39%
75	Massachusetts	Holyoke School District	Hadley School District	28.17	-292.11	5,153	35.85%	86.79%	506	7.68%	24.80%
76	Ohio	Lorain City School District	Amherst Exempted Village School District	28.13	3,530.73	5,724	36.77%	79.81%	3,500	8.64%	22.17%
77	Pennsylvania	Johnstown School District	Ligonier Valley School District	28.10	-5,937.85	2,881	41.84%	62.47%	1,426	13.75%	4.62%
78	Illinois	Madison Community Unit School District 12	Collinsville Community Unit School District 10	28.05	8,522.79	646	43.69%	96.26%	6,083	15.64%	46.09%
79	Pennsylvania	Sto-Rox School District	Montour School District	28.04	-6,596.20	1,168	34.92%	77.48%	2,955	6.88%	17.71%
80	Ohio	Warrensville Heights City School District	Orange City School District	28.03	-3,524.57	1,647	32.90%	99.02%	2,042	4.87%	31.57%
81	Pennsylvania	Philadelphia City School District	Lower Merion School District	28.01	-13,968.89	124,111	32.11%	85.57%	8,603	4.10%	33.73%
82	New York	Utica City School District	New Hartford Central School District	27.99	-2,434.29	9,679	33.24%	73.21%	2,551	5.26%	15.44%
83	Mississippi	Jackson Public School District	Rankin County School District	27.94	-22.87	20,401	40.06%	98.66%	18,384	12.12%	33.78%
84	Florida	Putnam County School District	Clay County School District	27.91	-338.99	10,319	39.05%	48.07%	38,268	11.15%	40.43%
85	Ohio	Toledo City School District	Ottawa Hills Local School District	27.88	-4,825.70	22,312	32.47%	71.16%	1,035	4.58%	25.67%
86	South Carolina	Orangeburg County School District	Berkeley County School District	27.83	242.23	11,739	40.88%	83.00%	36,575	13.04%	52.91%
87	New York	East Ramapo Central School District (Spring Valley)	Nanuet Union Free School District	27.83	-9,610.85	9,469	35.78%	95.80%	2,248	7.96%	58.21%
88	Pennsylvania	Chester-Upland School District	Penn-Delco School District	27.81	4,778.86	2,621	35.25%	98.27%	3,336	7.44%	19.61%
89	California	Beardsley Elementary School District	Norris Elementary School District	27.80	1,847.32	1,857	36.06%	61.41%	3,916	8.25%	50.01%
90	Alabama	Perry County School District	Chilton County School District	27.79	1,197.57	1,153	48.01%	99.72%	7,705	20.22%	35.22%
91	Wisconsin	Milwaukee School District	Mequon-Thiensville School District	27.70	-62.69	71,510	30.44%	90.39%	3,521	2.74%	24.80%
92	New York	Rochester City School District	Wheatland-Chili Central School District	27.67	-2,531.23	24,898	38.89%	90.85%	656	11.22%	30.52%
93	Ohio	Cincinnati City School District	Indian Hill Exempted Village School District	27.61	-2,146.66	34,635	32.20%	78.90%	2,160	4.58%	23.65%

Rank	State	High-Poverty District	Low-Poverty District	Difference in School-Aged Poverty Rate (Percentage Points)	Difference in Revenue (State + Local)*	High-Poverty District			Low-Poverty District		
						Enrollment	School-Aged Poverty Rate	Percent Students of Color	Enrollment	School-Aged Poverty Rate	Percent Students of Color
94	Alabama	Lowndes County School District	Autauga County School District	27.58	3,872.21	1,241	42.96%	97.88%	8,955	15.39%	37.00%
95	Pennsylvania	Erie City School District	Harbor Creek School District	27.52	-983.53	10,310	36.17%	62.48%	2,001	8.65%	7.67%
96	Illinois	Ford Heights School District 169	Steger School District 194	27.42	7,164.47	444	50.58%	100.00%	1,403	23.16%	77.75%
97	Missouri	Seymour R-II School District	Marshfield R-I School District	27.38	-669.71	712	42.64%	6.73%	2,993	15.26%	9.39%
98	Pennsylvania	Philadelphia City School District	Springfield Township School District	27.32	-4,049.60	124,111	32.11%	85.57%	2,555	4.79%	27.08%
99	Michigan	Ecorse Public School District	Wyandotte City School District	27.22	-3,207.31	1,187	40.18%	91.64%	4,495	12.96%	24.38%
100	Indiana	Gary Community School Corporation	Hobart School City	27.21	2,877.13	4,770	39.95%	98.77%	3,967	12.75%	38.67%

\*A negative funding difference indicates that the higher-poverty district has less funding than the lower-poverty district.

# Appendix B: 100 Most Segregating School District Borders by Difference in Percent Students of Color

Rank	State	District Enrolling More Students of Color	Districts Enrolling Fewer Students of Color	Difference in Percent Students of Color	Difference in Revenue (State + Local) *	District Enrolling More Students of Color			Districts Enrolling Fewer Students of Color		
						Enrollment	School-Aged Poverty Rate	Percent Students of Color	Enrollment	School-Aged Poverty Rate	Percent Students of Color
1	Alabama	Birmingham City School District	Mountain Brook City School District	92.58	-5,266.88	21,597	41.11%	98.90%	4,441	3.73%	6.31%
2	Michigan	Detroit Public Schools Community District	Dearborn City School District	91.19	-540.61	48,782	40.19%	97.49%	20,417	31.00%	6.30%
3	Mississippi	Aberdeen School District	Monroe County School District	88.88	2,628.52	1,081	30.86%	98.75%	2,095	15.43%	9.87%
4	Georgia	Hancock County School District	Glascocok County School District	88.22	2,611.20	785	39.41%	97.80%	569	17.99%	9.57%
5	Arkansas	Pine Bluff School District	Woodlawn School District	88.03	2,565.57	2,948	30.84%	97.34%	547	15.30%	9.30%
6	New Jersey	Red Bank Borough School District	Fair Haven Borough School District	87.63	1,650.28	1,382	20.16%	92.13%	969	2.06%	4.50%
7	Mississippi	East Jasper School District	Fair Haven Borough School District	87.37	3,581.85	824	29.72%	98.73%	924	14.48%	11.36%
8	Ohio	Trotwood-Madison City School District	Brookville Local School District	86.84	1,643.04	2,558	34.11%	92.56%	1,404	10.45%	5.72%
9	Alabama	Birmingham City School District	Walker County School District	86.55	1,544.67	21,597	41.11%	98.90%	7,176	25.66%	12.35%
10	Illinois	Hillside School District 93	Western Springs School District 101	85.83	11,024.38	455	17.42%	97.18%	1,498	1.44%	11.36%
11	Nebraska	Schuyler Community Schools	East Butler Public Schools	85.44	-13,271.79	2,001	12.04%	89.29%	296	6.18%	3.85%
12	Ohio	Trotwood-Madison City School District	New Lebanon Local School District	84.98	510.99	2,558	34.11%	92.56%	1,074	16.37%	7.58%
13	Nebraska	Schuyler Community Schools	Clarkson Public Schools	84.67	-5,393.30	2,001	12.04%	89.29%	240	8.13%	4.62%
14	Washington	Wellpinit School District	Davenport School District	84.47	-1,253.49	443	21.70%	94.86%	550	11.75%	10.39%
15	Arkansas	Pine Bluff School District	Sheridan School District	84.09	2,723.55	2,948	30.84%	97.34%	4,183	13.51%	13.25%
16	Nebraska	Schuyler Community Schools	North Bend Central Public Schools	83.11	-4,765.99	2,001	12.04%	89.29%	633	10.93%	6.18%
17	Arkansas	Forrest City School District	Palestine-Wheatley School District	82.88	134.52	2,295	38.47%	94.53%	809	29.80%	11.65%
18	Mississippi	Jefferson County School District	Lincoln County School District	82.88	211.40	1,089	42.89%	99.23%	2,733	20.43%	16.35%
19	New York	Amityville Union Free School District	Massapequa Union Free School District	82.48	-1,236.57	3,058	11.11%	95.23%	6,624	2.14%	12.75%
20	New Jersey	Red Bank Borough School District	Little Silver Borough School District	82.20	-1,234.48	1,382	20.16%	92.13%	785	2.58%	9.92%
21	Texas	Hart Independent School District	Nazareth Independent School District	82.06	1,986.75	212	25.23%	95.26%	250	6.18%	13.20%
22	Arkansas	Lee County School District	Palestine-Wheatley School District	81.91	143.27	702	42.07%	93.55%	809	29.80%	11.65%
23	Michigan	South Redford School District	Dearborn City School District	81.45	2,157.56	3,162	18.80%	87.75%	20,417	31.00%	6.30%
24	Minnesota	Mahnomon Public School District	Fertile-Beltrami School District	81.01	1,579.28	659	30.71%	87.16%	454	10.64%	6.15%
25	Illinois	Rich Township High School District 227	Peotone Community Unit School District 207U	80.99	12,589.57	2,614	20.82%	98.66%	1,299	6.71%	17.67%
26	Arkansas	Forrest City School District	McCrary School District	80.71	-718.64	2,295	38.47%	94.53%	570	26.36%	13.82%
27	Arkansas	Watson Chapel School District	Woodlawn School District	80.55	716.52	2,148	25.32%	89.86%	547	15.30%	9.30%
28	Georgia	Warren County School District	Glascocok County School District	80.46	1,956.56	640	38.97%	90.03%	569	17.99%	9.57%
29	Alabama	Birmingham City School District	Vestavia Hills City School District	80.45	-2,115.60	21,597	41.11%	98.90%	7,087	3.78%	18.45%
30	New Jersey	Red Bank Borough School District	Shrewsbury Borough School District	80.37	-2,588.79	1,382	20.16%	92.13%	445	2.34%	11.75%
31	Nebraska	Lexington Public Schools	Elm Creek Public Schools	80.31	-5,215.58	3,104	12.58%	86.65%	372	8.21%	6.34%
32	Minnesota	Mahnomon Public School District	Win-E-Mac School District	79.72	1,368.89	659	30.71%	87.16%	433	11.46%	7.44%
33	Nebraska	Schuyler Community Schools	Leigh Community Schools	79.66	-6,263.13	2,001	12.04%	89.29%	257	16.32%	9.63%
34	New York	Brentwood Union Free School District	West Islip Union Free School District	79.60	-9,170.07	18,320	11.23%	97.40%	4,005	2.67%	17.80%
35	Texas	Dimmitt Independent School District	Nazareth Independent School District	79.55	-939.33	1,182	20.34%	92.75%	250	6.18%	13.20%
36	New York	Uniondale Union Free School District	Garden City Union Free School District	79.42	-1,172.32	6,890	13.02%	98.78%	3,951	1.54%	19.36%
37	Michigan	South Redford School District	Crestwood School District	79.31	3,276.87	3,162	18.80%	87.75%	3,967	28.18%	8.43%
38	Illinois	Laraway Community Consolidated School District 70C	Manhattan School District 114	79.30	23,262.93	436	28.78%	92.70%	1,692	3.69%	13.41%
39	Texas	Beaumont Independent School District	Vidor Independent School District	79.27	236.81	17,128	27.73%	91.72%	4,236	19.64%	12.45%
40	New York	Hempstead Union Free School District	Garden City Union Free School District	78.98	-1,084.99	6,708	20.46%	98.35%	3,951	1.54%	19.36%
41	Minnesota	Cass Lake-Bena Public Schools	Grand Rapids Public School District	78.75	-139.93	1,107	23.01%	92.53%	3,964	10.46%	13.78%
42	New Jersey	Camden City School District	Haddon Township School District	78.69	21,634.60	7,553	36.72%	99.18%	2,000	6.90%	20.49%
43	Pennsylvania	Chester-Upland School District	Penn-Delco School District	78.66	4,778.86	2,621	35.25%	98.27%	3,336	7.44%	19.61%
44	Nebraska	Lexington Public Schools	Elwood Public Schools	78.63	-8,145.84	3,104	12.58%	86.65%	212	14.22%	8.02%
45	Ohio	Bedford City School District	Cuyahoga Heights Local School District	78.52	-3,278.83	2,919	21.88%	92.79%	832	5.41%	14.27%
46	Nebraska	South Sioux City Community Schools	Ponca Public Schools	78.34	-3,815.86	3,734	14.33%	84.77%	453	7.23%	6.43%
47	Ohio	Youngstown City School District	Poland Local School District	78.04	7,907.53	4,879	49.16%	86.31%	1,710	7.45%	8.28%
48	Illinois	Cahokia Community Unit School District 187	Dupo Community Unit School District 196	77.69	3,893.73	3,187	41.42%	95.27%	985	19.18%	17.57%
49	Michigan	Westwood Community Schools	Dearborn City School District	77.35	-476.94	1,533	35.92%	83.65%	20,417	31.00%	6.30%
50	Texas	Beaumont Independent School District	Lumberton Independent School District	77.20	1,775.66	17,128	27.73%	91.72%	4,144	9.93%	14.52%
51	Washington	Inchelium School District	Republic School District	77.09	1,046.40	227	24.18%	91.74%	408	24.50%	14.65%
52	Pennsylvania	Reading School District	Schuylkill Valley School District	76.68	-5,402.34	17,659	34.70%	94.83%	2,080	8.37%	18.15%

Rank	State	District Enrolling More Students of Color	Districts Enrolling Fewer Students of Color	Difference in Percent Students of Color	Difference in Revenue (State + Local) *	District Enrolling More Students of Color			Districts Enrolling Fewer Students of Color		
						Enrollment	School-Aged Poverty Rate	Percent Students of Color	Enrollment	School-Aged Poverty Rate	Percent Students of Color
53	Ohio	Garfield Heights City School District	Cuyahoga Heights Local School District	76.66	-7,556.56	3,491	27.28%	90.93%	832	5.41%	14.27%
54	Louisiana	East Carroll Parish School District	West Carroll Parish School District	76.62	1,647.46	836	45.11%	99.74%	1,914	31.40%	23.12%
55	Arkansas	Watson Chapel School District	Sheridan School District	76.61	874.51	2,148	25.32%	89.86%	4,183	13.51%	13.25%
56	Illinois	Rich Township High School District 227	Lincoln Way Community High School District 210	76.54	8,722.04	2,614	20.82%	98.66%	6,721	3.20%	22.12%
57	Texas	Dimmitt Independent School District	Happy Independent School District	76.53	1,183.70	1,182	20.34%	92.75%	269	11.06%	16.22%
58	New Jersey	Roselle Borough School District	Cranford Township School District	76.28	119.35	2,897	15.73%	97.58%	3,710	2.22%	21.30%
59	Michigan	Bridgeport-Spaulling Community School District	Birch Run Area School District	76.23	-19.90	1,494	30.50%	85.59%	1,843	11.88%	9.37%
60	Nebraska	Madison Public Schools	Humphrey Public Schools	76.21	-4,074.17	568	10.14%	76.21%	287	4.79%	0.00%
61	Arkansas	Pine Bluff School District	DeWitt School District	76.19	1,033.50	2,948	30.84%	97.34%	1,187	22.14%	21.15%
62	Michigan	Bridgeport-Spaulling Community School District	Frankenmuth School District	76.16	-1,502.77	1,494	30.50%	85.59%	1,362	5.25%	9.43%
63	Illinois	Elementary School District 159	Frankfort Community Consolidated School District 157C	75.99	9,419.72	1,779	23.02%	98.46%	2,528	3.47%	22.47%
64	Alabama	Birmingham City School District	Trussville City School District	75.93	-1,920.47	21,597	41.11%	98.90%	4,816	4.99%	22.97%
65	Illinois	Peoria School District 150	Brimfield Community Unit School District 309	75.92	1,441.90	12,515	29.92%	80.09%	655	4.29%	4.17%
66	Illinois	Fairmont School District 89	Homer Community Consolidated School District 33C	75.80	2,987.00	313	24.66%	91.30%	3,650	4.81%	15.50%
67	Michigan	Bridgeport-Spaulling Community School District	Chesaning Union Schools	75.70	-1,075.16	1,494	30.50%	85.59%	1,422	17.67%	9.89%
68	Ohio	Jefferson Township Local School District	Valley View Local School District	75.70	6,418.68	271	27.52%	82.38%	1,714	10.82%	6.67%
69	Texas	Dallas Independent School District	Highland Park Independent School District	75.68	-2,883.13	145,113	23.92%	93.96%	6,648	3.59%	18.28%
70	Illinois	Kankakee School District 111	Herschler Community Unit School District 2	75.53	-1,028.78	4,980	26.63%	82.05%	1,658	7.01%	6.52%
71	Washington	Wahluke School District	Kititas School District	75.25	-2,874.15	2,523	12.22%	98.63%	646	8.03%	23.38%
72	Michigan	Westwood Community Schools	Crestwood School District	75.21	642.36	1,533	35.92%	83.65%	3,967	28.18%	8.43%
73	Ohio	Youngstown City School District	Canfield Local School District	75.21	8,612.05	4,879	49.16%	86.31%	2,515	5.70%	11.10%
74	Illinois	Laraway Community Consolidated School District 70C	Channahon School District 17	74.89	16,773.09	436	28.78%	92.70%	1,202	5.08%	17.81%
75	Pennsylvania	Aliquippa School District	Hopewell Area School District	74.88	901.72	940	30.35%	87.00%	2,107	8.86%	12.12%
76	Ohio	Jefferson Township Local School District	New Lebanon Local School District	74.80	6,997.49	271	27.52%	82.38%	1,074	16.37%	7.58%
77	Illinois	Aurora East Unit School District 131	Batavia Unit School District 101	74.54	-4,764.38	13,224	21.04%	97.24%	5,366	4.74%	22.70%
78	Mississippi	West Point Consolidated School District	Monroe County School District	74.42	-174.48	2,866	31.37%	84.30%	2,095	15.43%	9.87%
79	Ohio	Youngstown City School District	Hubbard Exempted Village School District	74.38	8,429.90	4,879	49.16%	86.31%	1,872	12.76%	11.93%
80	Indiana	Warren Township Metropolitan School District	Southern Hancock County Community School Corporation	74.29	1,380.57	11,612	19.65%	82.97%	3,728	4.21%	8.68%
81	Michigan	Benton Harbor Area Schools	St. Joseph Public Schools	74.24	1,529.77	1,613	41.05%	98.34%	2,963	5.45%	24.10%
82	Massachusetts	Springfield School District	Hamden-Wilbraham School District	73.73	-2,493.60	24,239	37.30%	91.28%	2,865	7.20%	17.54%
83	Texas	Cleveland Independent School District	Tarkington Independent School District	73.68	1,459.26	8,888	27.55%	90.10%	1,718	22.25%	16.42%
84	New Jersey	East Orange City School District	Glen Ridge Borough School District	73.66	3,319.94	9,344	22.72%	99.42%	1,842	2.42%	25.76%
85	Michigan	Southfield Public School District	Birmingham City School District	73.61	-2,413.30	5,182	13.02%	97.65%	7,538	2.83%	24.04%
86	New York	Mount Vernon School District	Bronxville Union Free School District	73.57	24.28	7,348	18.02%	95.05%	1,603	2.30%	21.48%
87	Illinois	Community Consolidated School District 180	Lemont-Bromberek Combined School District 113A	73.57	17,413.51	463	22.11%	89.70%	2,348	5.19%	16.13%
88	Indiana	Pike Township Metropolitan School District	Zionsville Community Schools	73.56	-797.45	10,919	16.10%	92.95%	7,450	2.40%	19.40%
89	Nebraska	Lexington Public Schools	Overton Public Schools	73.22	-3,603.13	3,104	12.58%	86.65%	288	11.30%	13.43%
90	Pennsylvania	Harrisburg City School District	West Shore School District	73.22	2,344.35	6,471	33.59%	96.73%	7,357	8.94%	23.52%
91	Mississippi	Okolona Separate School District	Pontotoc County Schools	72.94	1,658.89	547	31.50%	97.50%	3,524	21.20%	24.57%
92	Nebraska	Lexington Public Schools	Bertrand Public Schools	72.94	-9,819.24	3,104	12.58%	86.65%	250	15.60%	13.71%
93	Florida	Gadsden County School District	Liberty County School District	72.80	374.56	4,924	38.84%	96.07%	1,273	25.32%	23.27%
94	Michigan	Southfield Public School District	Berkley School District	72.75	534.37	5,182	13.02%	97.65%	4,105	5.58%	24.89%
95	Nebraska	Schuyler Community Schools	Howells-Dodge Consolidated Schools	72.69	-6,938.66	2,001	12.04%	89.29%	284	6.90%	16.61%
96	Michigan	Benton Harbor Area Schools	Watervliet School District	72.59	2,210.23	1,613	41.05%	98.34%	1,474	22.77%	25.76%
97	New Jersey	Lawsides Borough School District	Barrington Borough School District	72.56	3,639.45	318	18.35%	96.92%	567	9.09%	24.36%
98	Arkansas	Marvell School District	DeWitt School District	72.54	3,457.55	344	33.27%	93.69%	1,187	22.14%	21.15%
99	Illinois	Cairo Community Unit School District 1	Egyptian Community Unit School District 5	72.39	8,908.48	298	45.90%	92.39%	383	30.56%	20.00%
100	Alabama	Anniston City School District	Calhoun County School District	72.34	617.90	1,898	35.40%	94.34%	8,104	20.96%	22.00%

\*A negative funding difference indicates that the district with a higher proportion of students of color has less funding than the district with a lower proportion of students of color.

## Appendix C: Segregating Borders by State

State	Total School Districts	Borders Analyzed	Mean Difference in Percent Students of Color	Difference in School-Aged Poverty Rate (Percentage Points)	Point Difference in Percent Students of Color			Point Difference in Poverty Rate		
					Number of Borders with >20 Point Difference	Number of Borders with >35 Point Difference	Number of Borders with >50 Point Difference	Number of Borders with >10 Point Difference	Number of Borders with >20 Point Difference	Number of Borders with >30 Point Difference
Alaska	53	1	27.68	0.08	0	0	0	0	0	0
Alabama	138	318	23.02	8.22	16	6	1	98	23	9
Arkansas	234	643	18.85	5.6	55	17	2	106	2	0
Arizona	206	193	16.67	6.56	9	2	1	46	5	0
California	939	1209	14.92	4.98	71	21	4	149	9	0
Colorado	178	250	18.14	4.45	24	6	1	17	0	0
Connecticut	166	276	20.22	5.72	6	0	0	60	16	0
Delaware	16	25	13.25	4.19	0	0	0	3	0	0
Florida	67	137	15.98	6.53	18	5	0	26	8	1
Georgia	180	431	19.71	6.53	36	11	1	83	24	1
Hawaii	1	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Iowa	327	778	11.13	3.8	16	7	2	40	0	0
Idaho	115	160	13.38	3.7	8	2	1	5	0	0
Illinois	849	1585	14.88	5.51	45	10	3	237	32	1
Indiana	290	754	12.31	4.81	35	5	0	93	4	0
Kansas	284	575	11.37	3.77	20	3	1	32	0	0
Kentucky	171	379	8.78	5.62	20	3	0	56	4	2
Louisiana	68	160	19.21	7.33	8	1	0	40	5	1
Massachusetts	289	534	16.33	5.04	12	0	0	77	12	2
Maryland	24	31	22.3	6.12	3	1	0	4	1	0
Maine	214	167	5.34	4.44	0	0	0	14	0	0
Michigan	537	1287	13.47	5.64	43	14	3	210	42	8
Minnesota	327	794	14.09	3.71	22	3	0	40	1	0
Missouri	514	936	9.08	4.93	25	10	0	103	5	0
Mississippi	137	317	24.24	7.86	16	4	0	94	21	1
Montana	395	86	8.19	3.64	0	0	0	2	0	0
North Carolina	115	257	15.02	5.52	10	1	0	38	2	0
North Dakota	167	81	9.44	2.77	1	1	0	1	0	0
Nebraska	244	469	13.81	3.69	30	14	8	22	0	0
New Hampshire	164	147	5.46	3.2	0	0	0	7	0	0
New Jersey	540	767	18.54	4.9	31	3	0	108	16	0
New Mexico	89	77	13.24	6.9	5	0	0	19	2	0
Nevada	17	9	15.55	2.54	0	0	0	0	0	0
New York	675	1584	13.72	5.17	27	5	0	198	40	5
Ohio	609	1653	11.62	6.17	28	6	1	313	80	11
Oklahoma	506	885	11.93	5.12	38	5	0	107	11	0
Oregon	196	341	13.36	3.92	19	8	3	22	0	0
Pennsylvania	499	1363	12.67	5.31	20	3	1	199	47	6
Rhode Island	36	54	19.21	6.46	1	0	0	12	4	0
South Carolina	75	187	17.91	6.63	19	2	0	41	2	0
South Dakota	149	209	12.18	4.05	9	5	2	14	0	0
Tennessee	140	305	14.82	5.34	28	8	0	42	3	0
Texas	1019	2146	19.05	5.57	125	39	8	335	21	1
Utah	41	62	10.3	2.81	0	0	0	1	0	0
Virginia	132	269	15.22	5.78	13	1	0	43	7	0
Vermont*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Washington	294	424	15.76	3.73	28	7	4	18	0	0
Wisconsin	421	1003	10.11	4.14	26	7	2	72	12	0
West Virginia	55	124	4.53	4.5	1	0	0	12	0	0
Wyoming	48	34	9.15	2.58	2	0	0	0	0	0

\*Note that Vermont is excluded from the analysis due to incomplete data

## Appendix D: Data and Methodology

### Data Sources for Primary Analysis

To create the school district border dataset used in this analysis and mapping tool, we obtained data from the following sources:

- **School district geography:** School district boundary data for the 2020-21 school year comes from the Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates Program (EDGE), Composite School District Boundaries File.
- **School district revenues:** Revenues from federal, state, and local sources for the 2021 fiscal year come from the U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Survey of School System Finances, also known to researchers by the **survey number F33**. The following adjustments were made to the revenues for some or all school districts:
  1. We exclude revenue for capital outlay and debt service programs from state revenues, because it can contribute to large fluctuations in district revenues from year to year. Similarly, we exclude money generated from the sale of property from local revenues.
  2. We subtract from state and local revenues the total amount of money sent to separate charter local education agencies (LEAs)—an expenditure category included in the F33 survey—divided proportionally across the local, state, and federal revenue categories based on the percent of each district’s revenues that come from these sources. This adjustment addresses the fact that, in just under 2,000 districts, revenues received by local school districts include funds that are transferred to charter schools that are operated by charter LEAs. This artificially inflates the per-pupil revenues in these school districts, because this pass-through charter funding is included in the district’s revenue, but the students educated by these charter schools are not counted in enrollment totals.
  3. In the state of Arkansas, some revenues that are collected locally are categorized as state revenues. Before analysis, we subtracted the values of these collections from state revenues and added them to local revenues. The misattribution of revenue for each district is described in the F33 documentation as C24, Census state, NCES local revenue.

See the [\*\*Annual Survey of School System Finances: Public Elementary-Secondary Education Finance Data Technical Documentation \(2021\)\*\*](#) for state-specific notes in relation to education finance data.

- **School district enrollments and racial composition**: School district enrollment characteristics for the 2020–21 school year come from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD). When data for 2020–21 are not available, we use the previous year’s data. In conjunction with the above finance data, these enrollment statistics are used to calculate per-pupil revenue figures.
- **School district school-aged poverty rates**: School district-level data on poverty rates among school-age children in 2021 come from the U.S. Census Bureau’s Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE).
- **School district community indicators**: School district-level economic, demographic, housing, and social indicators, including median household income and median value of owner-occupied homes from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2017–2021). The data are provided by Education Demographic and Geographic Estimates (EDGE), drawing upon data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, and U.S. Census Bureau.
- **Native American reservations and other Native lands**: The boundary data for Native lands come from the American Indian Areas/Alaska Native Areas/Hawaiian Home Lands Boundary File from the Census Bureau’s MAF/TIGER geographic database. This includes shapefiles for all federally and state-recognized American Indian reservations, off-reservation trust lands, Tribal-designated statistical areas, state-designated Tribal statistical areas, Alaska Native village statistical areas, Oklahoma Tribal statistical areas, and Hawaiian Home Lands.

### **Methodology for Primary Analysis**

We conducted a spatial analysis of all unified, secondary, and elementary districts in the United States. This process identified all pairs of school district neighbors that share a border. Only districts that share land borders and borders along linear bodies of water were considered to be neighbors. Districts whose shared borders exist entirely along wider bodies of water, such as lakes, were not considered to be neighbors. Pairs were excluded from this neighbor list if their shared boundary was less than 500 feet long or if the two districts were located in different states.

Each neighbor pair was identified by their shared school district border and joined to the data from the SAIPE, CCD, and ACS described above. To determine the degree of economic segregation between the districts separated by each border, we calculated the difference in their school-aged poverty rates.



Each neighbor pair was identified by their shared school district border and joined to the data from the SAIPE, CCD, and ACS described above. To determine the degree of economic segregation between the districts separated by each border, we calculated the difference in their school-aged poverty rates. To determine the degree of racial segregation between the districts separated by each border, we aggregated the enrollment percentages for all racial groups other than non-Hispanic white into a new category representing each district's percentage of students of color enrolled and took the difference in these enrollment percentages. After making the exclusions outlined below, we ranked each border in our dataset by the degree of both racial and economic segregation it enforces. Similarly, we computed the dollar amount difference in local, state, and the combined value of local and state revenues between districts; this information was not used for ranking but is provided for context.

### ***School District Exclusions***

We employed several exclusion criteria in compiling our borders dataset. Our analysis includes only districts that meet our standard requirements for a geography-based analysis. Therefore, any district that does not have a defined geographic area and is not included in the Composite School District Boundaries File was excluded. We also excluded districts from the U.S. territories. Further, because we only identify within-state school district neighbors, Hawaii and the District of Columbia were excluded from the neighbor-pair analysis, as they each have only one school district.

There are three types of school districts: unified, elementary, and secondary. Our analysis was confined to certain categories of district pairs in order to avoid comparing resources across districts of different types. These pairings include unified to unified, unified to secondary, secondary to secondary, and elementary to elementary.

We additionally excluded school districts where the student population is at least 75 percent Native, or where more than 75 percent of the area overlaps with American Indian reservation land. For the purposes of this report, American Indian reservations are not considered to include off-reservation trust lands or Tribal statistical areas, as neither are considered to be sovereign administrative units. Trust lands are administered by the federal government, and often have relatively small Native populations. State and federal designated Tribal statistical areas, including Oklahoma Tribal statistical areas and Alaska Native village statistical areas, encompass areas with significant Native populations, but whose Tribal majority do not have a reservation or trust lands. School districts where 75 percent of the area overlaps with any other kind of reservation land are excluded from this analysis. For more information on the reason for this exclusion, please see the section “Divided Districts and Native Students” above.

Since the school-aged poverty rates are estimates, they are not always reliable for school districts with very small school-age populations. Therefore, we removed districts where the student population is less than 200 and did not analyze or rank the borders they share with neighboring districts.

Finally, we removed districts with a student density of less than or equal to 0.5 students per square mile, as these districts often face unique geographic considerations due to the extremely low student density. The borders of these districts with their neighbors were not analyzed or ranked.

After applying the above exclusions, we analyzed, ranked, and mapped the resulting database of 24,658 pairs of district neighbors.

### **Additional Calculations and Data Sources**

Throughout this report, we supplement our borders dataset with additional state-level data in order to provide context to our findings.

Median household income is also used to measure economic disparity between districts in specific instances. We calculate these disparities between neighboring districts as the ratio of the median household income in the higher-income district to that in the lower-income district. While we do not report these disparities in the national data explorer, we note the differences for specific geographic areas in the full report.

The full report also includes brief discussion of analyses of assessed property valuations and per-pupil revenues in select states: Arkansas, Connecticut, Mississippi, and Ohio.

Connecticut aggregates assessed property values at the town level in its [Equalized Net Grand List](#) dataset. Though the default public school district in Connecticut also serves town units, there are 17 regional districts that serve multiple municipalities. Using a dataset provided by the School State Finance Project, we were able to link the towns served by each district with both the state and national LEA codes. This connection allowed us to link our borders dataset with assessed property values.

To compute assessed property values per pupil in Connecticut, we first calculate the share of each regional district's enrollment from each of its constituent towns. As previously mentioned, only regional districts draw from more than one town. We then multiply the total assessed value for each town by its enrollment share in a regional district. We obtain the total assessed value per pupil by summing across each of a district's constituent towns and dividing by its enrollment.

We also calculate assessed valuations per pupil in [Arkansas](#), [Mississippi](#), and [Ohio](#), each of which aggregate the total value of assessed property at the school district level. We divide this value by a district's enrollment.

To determine if a statistical relationship is present between differences in assessed property value per pupil and the degree of segregation between districts, we separately regress our measures of racial and economic segregation on assessed property value per pupil. We report a relationship as statistically significant if it is valid at the  $\alpha = 0.01$  level.

## Notes

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