



Research Paper

Racial Isolation in Schools after Brown v. Board of Education

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Abstract: In 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education* marked a significant turning point during the Civil Rights Movement. It was the first Supreme Court case to legally invalidate school segregation, challenging the inequality of educational resources based on race. However, this ruling did not function as intended even after 70 years passed by. Many schools and areas in the U.S. are beginning to experience *de facto* racial isolation, bringing back the injustice and disparities from our earlier history. This paper discusses reasons leading to contemporary *de facto* racial isolation and focuses on how different aspects, such as residential sorting and socioeconomic status, intertwine together leading to a growing cycle of isolation. This paper demonstrates how racial and economic segregation overlap and reinforce each other. Hence it is crucial for us to recognize this persistent inequality of educational opportunities caused by racial and ethnic isolation and we must take action towards meaningful reform.

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I. INTRODUCTION:

About 70 years ago, *Brown v. Board of Education* outlawed *de jure* racial segregation in schools, protecting students' constitutional rights to equal educational opportunities under the Fourteenth Amendment. As a landmark lawsuit led by the NAACP, *Brown v. Board of Education* was significant in its abolition of legalized segregation in schools.¹ It ended the doctrine of "separate but equal" established in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), a case that upheld racial segregation, and revolutionized the interpretation of the Equal Protection Clause.² The impact of *Brown* was profound. It set a transformative constitutional precedent, legally outlawing racial segregations in schools. However, even though *Brown* theoretically invalidated racial segregation, desegregation did not proceed accordingly. Almost immediately after the ruling of *Brown*, some politicians launched strategies to defy it.³ Many years later, this form of resistance subsided, but *de facto* segregation continued in our education system. We still see a trend of re-segregation and isolation in schools.

For the purpose of this essay, racial/ethnic isolation will be defined in relation to the proportion of students who are predominantly or exclusively exposed to individuals of the same racial or ethnic background within their neighborhoods.

Students of the same race or economic status concentrate in the same schools and districts, contributing to this re-segregation. Such a reality reflects a reactionary rollback of the revolutionary case of *Brown*, which established *de jure* equality for students. In large school districts, racial segregation has increased by 35% while economic segregation has increased by 47% over the past 30 years.⁴ This data indicates that the issue of segregation is not only persistent even after the landmark ruling of *Brown*, but also that it has worsened over time.

¹ "1954: *Brown v. Board of Education* (U.S. National Park Service)," accessed July 28, 2025, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/brown-v-board-of-education.htm>.

² "1954."

³ "The Southern Manifesto and 'Massive Resistance' to *Brown*," *Legal Defense Fund*, n.d., accessed July 28, 2025, <https://www.naacpldf.org/brown-vs-board/southern-manifesto-massive-resistance-brown/>.

⁴ "New 'Segregation Index' Shows American Schools Remain Highly Segregated by Race, Ethnicity and Economic Status | Stanford Graduate School of Education," July 25, 2025, <https://ed.stanford.edu/news/new-segregation-index-shows-american-schools-remain-highly-segregated-race-ethnicity-and>.

Moreover, a direct relationship may be seen between de facto racial isolation due to spatial and social stratification, which are driven by economic and residential disparity. The continued entrenchment of racial isolation in schools is driven by multiple, intertwining factors, such as socioeconomic disparities and gerrymandered school zones. Accordingly, to address it, we need to consider all the factors that influence it.

This paper will examine the underlying causes of the gradual racial and economic isolation after Brown. More specifically, it will explore the relationship between several interconnected factors: 1) imbalanced racial and ethnic distribution in schools, 2) economic disparity between students, 3) negative policy impacts on integration, and 4) school zone boundaries.

1) Imbalanced Racial And Ethnic Distribution In Schools

Racial isolation in schools has persisted long after the implementation of de jure desegregation policies. Students of the same race or ethnic group tend to concentrate in the same schools due to racial sorting and demographic imbalance. Approximately 18.5 million students in public schools are enrolled in schools where 75% of the students share the same race or ethnicity and 14% attend schools that are 90% single race.⁵ In other words, a large proportion of students are enrolled in racially homogeneous environments, where they have access only to peers from similar racial or ethnic backgrounds. This isolation goes against our initial aspiration of promoting diversity and integration, and directly relates to unequal distribution of educational resources and access. In searching for a solution to this issue, we must first acknowledge that this segregation is not random. Such racial segregation coincides with the social structure and residential sorting that continue to separate students by race, and will be further explored in the following section.

Shifts of population have increasingly exacerbated urban and suburban racial segregation. While wealthy and high-income families, who are disproportionately white, move to suburban areas, high-poverty populations remain in urban areas. Over time, this trend creates serious racial and income isolation, sustained by demographic sorting and residential segregation. Over half (51%) of racial inequality in schools can be accounted for by the urban and suburban division.⁶ This statistic indicates that the majority school isolation is not happening within schools, but is instead driven by the school districts where the students live. Such division is responsible for the unequal distribution of educational resources. Suburban low-poverty schools are able to provide wealthy students with enriched academic environments, while urban high-poverty schools with limited funding provide fewer advanced courses. This also created larger barriers to the promotion of diversity and integration, since residential segregation effectively sorts students by income even before they enter the school system.

Though urban-suburban segregation contributed to the majority of school-level racial and socioeconomic disparities, significant segregation also occurs even between suburban school districts themselves. Population flows among different districts in suburban areas are still not equal, and about one-third of the racial and ethnic inequality occurs among suburban areas.⁷ In the context of this essay, population flows are defined as the movement and relocation of families from districts to districts, directly impacting the racial and socioeconomic makeup of schools. Diversity in suburban schools is still unevenly distributed. This data reveals that school inequality is not only an urban-suburban issue, but also deeply embedded in the suburban school districts. It is crucial to recognize the need to address segregation at all levels, not only in cities.

In attempts to promote integration, many schools focus on recruiting minority students, creating numerous majority-minority schools. However, it is important for us to acknowledge that majority-minority schools do not equal integration or diversity. Over-enrolling minority students in certain schools will only lead to further division based on race. Majority-minority schools will eventually tend to have predominantly minority students and. As a result, other schools will still concentrate majority students. In 2018-2019, 42% of black students were enrolled in majority-Black schools; 56% of Hispanic students were enrolled in majority-Hispanic schools; and 79% of white students were enrolled in majority-White schools.⁸ This overwhelmingly high

⁵ "Connection Between Residential and School Segregation | NAACP," accessed August 4, 2025, <https://naacp.org/resources/connection-between-residential-and-school-segregation>.

⁶ Ann Owens and Peter Rich, "Little Boxes All the Same? Racial-Ethnic Segregation and Educational Inequality Across the Urban-Suburban Divide," *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 9, no. 2 (2023): 26–54, <https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2023.9.2.02>.

⁷ Owens and Rich, "Little Boxes All the Same?"

⁸ Pedro A. Noguera, "US Schools Are Not Racially Integrated, despite Decades of Effort," *The Conversation*, May 13, 2022, <http://theconversation.com/us-schools-are-not-racially-integrated-despite-decades-of-effort-177849>.

percentage of students educated in same-race environments suggests that the promotion of majority-minority schools did not effectively reduce racial isolation but instead sustained it. Diversity is indeed important while considering how to support minority students, but blindly promoting majority-minority schools is obviously not a sustainable way to reach true integration.

In addition to the simple majority and minority race segregation, worsening isolation of specific racial groups is also an issue demanding attention. Students with the same race and ethnicity tend to gather in schools that are predominantly composed of only their identity. Moreover, not only white-black segregation is becoming increasingly persistent, other minority groups such as Asians and Hispanics are also developing more isolated educational environments where students only communicate with people who share the same race or ethnicity with them.⁹ This phenomenon further reinforces racial isolation in that students are even more dispersed by race and isolated from other groups.

Long term isolation in single-race or ethnicity environments leads to more peer isolation effects that only worsen the issue. Whether in their neighborhoods or schools, students growing up in an environment that contains primarily people of their own identity creates an invisible wall between them and people of other races or ethnicity. It may become a habit and comfort zone for them to only interact in racially homogeneous environments and hence feel socially distanced from others. Studies on school segregation have shown that Asian and African American youth who experienced prolonged neighborhood isolation from an early age are more likely to feel socially distanced from their white peers. Consequently, they prefer same-race neighbors and peers—thus starting a self-reinforcing cycle of racial separation.¹⁰ However, this pattern can only be effectively mitigated by exposing minority youth to diverse social environments early in their development. Peer isolation is not only a consequence of segregation but also a significant driver of its persistence, as it limits cross-racial understanding and comfort.

2) Economic disparity

Economic disparity undoubtedly plays an important role in racial isolation in schools. As mentioned in the previous section, we can already see some tangible effects brought by economic disparity in residential sorting. High-income families gather in wealthy communities while low-income families gather in impoverished communities. Such residential concentration directly leads to segregation by income, which then is closely intertwined with racial and ethnic segregation. Several specific aspects of economic disparity that directly lead to school segregation, such as income inequality, funding gaps, and resource limitations, will be explicitly discussed in this section.

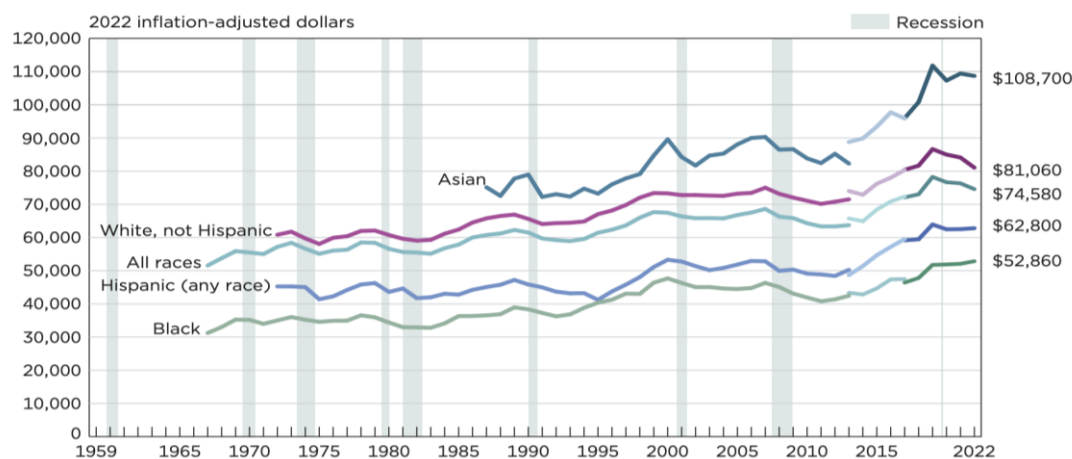


Figure 1: Real Median Household Income by Race and Hispanic Origin, 1967 to 2022. All US Census Bureau materials are in the Public Domain.¹¹

⁹ “New ‘Segregation Index’ Shows American Schools Remain Highly Segregated by Race, Ethnicity and Economic Status | Stanford Graduate School of Education.”

¹⁰ Jomills Henry Braddock and Amaryllis Del Carmen Gonzalez, “Social Isolation and Social Cohesion: The Effects of K–12 Neighborhood and School Segregation on Intergroup Orientations,” *Teachers College Record: The Voice of Scholarship in Education* 112, no. 6 (2010): 1631, <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146811011200606>.

¹¹ Figure 2. Real Median Household Income by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1967 to 2022, n.d., <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/visualizations/2023/demo/p60-279/figure2.pdf>.

Income inequality between racial groups has been a long-standing historical issue in the US. Median household income varies largely based on race and this trend is becoming increasingly pronounced.¹² In 2022, the median household differed significantly across racial groups: income by Asians households reached \$108,700, followed by White households at \$81,060, Hispanic households at \$62,800, and Black households at \$52,860.¹³ These data highlight the severity of wealth gaps between racial groups. Specifically, the largest gap, which happens between Asian and Black households, has reached \$55,840, over half of the median income of all races.¹⁴ This increasing inequality between racial groups is a major factor that may lead to the unequal distribution of students of different incomes, which is further compounded by race. Schools are hence reduced in diversity and Asian or White students may be able to enjoy significantly better educational quality than Hispanic and Black students.

Due to the school segregation caused by inequality between racial groups, it is extremely difficult for low-income families to achieve upward mobility. In other words, the inability of low-income families to access high-cost neighborhoods creates a structural barrier for any real possibility of integration under the current situation. High-performing public schools often are located in neighborhoods that have significantly higher house costs than low-income families can afford.¹⁵ This phenomenon systematically excludes low-income families, which are disproportionately Black and Hispanic, from accessing high quality education. As a result, income inequality reinforces economic disparity and deepened racial isolation, creating a vicious cycle that keeps marginalised communities locked out of the opportunity to receive equitable education and access to advanced resources.

Because of the wealth gap between different income communities, different neighborhoods have unequal capability to raise funds for public education. Public school funding is highly tied to local property taxes. High-poverty neighborhoods do not have that much money to pay the tax for infrastructure and educational resources, resulting in local schools having less funding for teacher salaries, classrooms, and extracurriculars. Funding of public schools is a crucial factor that influences academic achievement in schools, and in turn, the further economic success of students, who will be the economic foundation of their future generations.¹⁶ Under this stark contrast of educational qualities, wealthy families move or choose to stay in neighborhoods that have higher taxes but receive better education, further sorting students by socioeconomic status. And with the persistent difference in the wealth gaps between different racial groups, certain racial neighborhoods, such as Whites, secure better education that sets them apart from others.

One significant negative effect of racial and economic isolation in schools is its impact on access to educational resources. Advance courses such as AP, IB, or other advanced STEM programs are largely limited to the financial capability of a school. Schools without enough funding won't be able to provide such varied courses to support students' academic growth, which further restricts their advancement and reinforces segregation. A report by the Government Accountability Office found that fewer advanced math, science and college-prep classes are offered in high-poverty schools, which also have an overrepresented amount of black and hispanic students expelled or suspended in ninth grade.¹⁷ Such imbalance in schools curtails the opportunity for underrepresented students to access rigorous academic pathways and compete on equal footing with their peers.

Even when advanced courses are available, the underrepresentation of minority students in those courses discourages peers from enrolling. Seeing other students from the same racial or ethnic groups participating or excluded from such academic programs may form influential stereotypes that affect whether the students participate in the program. According to an Urban Institute's analysis, the percentage increase of Black upperclassmen(11th and 12th grade) enrolled in AP math courses significantly increased the likelihood of Black

¹² Figure 2. *Real Median Household Income by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1967 to 2022.*

¹³ Figure 2. *Real Median Household Income by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1967 to 2022.*

¹⁴ Figure 2. *Real Median Household Income by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1967 to 2022.*

¹⁵ Jonathan Rothwell, *Housing Costs, Zoning, and Access to High- Scoring Schools*, n.d.

¹⁶ Samantha Jones, "How School Funding Inequities Impact Student Success," *Educational Equity Institute*, April 8, 2025, <https://educationalequityinstitute.com/school-funding-inequities/>.

¹⁷ John Conyers, Jr. and Robert C. "Bobby" Scott, *K-12 EDUCATION: Better Use of Information Could Help Agencies Identify Disparities and Address Racial Discrimination*, Report to Congressional Requester GAO-16-345 (U.S.Governmental Accountability Office, 2016).

freshmen to also enroll in such courses.¹⁸ This finding highlights the importance of representation of minority group students as a catalyst of encouraging the participation in advanced programs among their peers. Students seeing peers of the same race or ethnicity succeeding in such programs also challenges the prevailing stereotype about belonging and academic confidence. Therefore, ensuring adequate representation of minority students in equitable educational resources is a critical aspect we should focus on in addressing racial isolation in schools.

3) Negative Policy Impacts On Integration

Though discussing de facto segregation happening in schools, we still have to acknowledge the lasting influence of de jure policies on this issue. Intervention by the government is a decisive factor in the process of desegregation. Legal action is the most direct and powerful means to initiate change and transform something about our society. In 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education* ruled racial segregation in schools to be unconstitutional and mandated desegregation policies.¹⁹ The ruling of this case seemed to dismantle racial segregation and begin progress towards, at least de jure, justice and equality. However, many years later the implementation of other cases and policies aiming to promote integration accordingly instead engendered counterproductive effects. This section is going to explore the rollback of integration policies, inequitable school funding formulas, and lack of federal enforcement in this perpetuation of racial isolation.

Economic disparities between school districts are impacted by policy decisions. State-level education funding is a crucial financial resource for public schools. However, the many state-level education funding formulas remain inequitable in our system, creating an imbalance in the capability of schools to offer educational resources. In 1998-2019, the gaps between 10 highest and lowest spending states widened about 250 percent, and much of these gaps, specifically from 2007-09, increased due to the inequality of funding after the Great Recession.²⁰ This data indicates a significant disparity in the funding of different states, resulting in the unevenness of educational quality in each state. High-income families pursuing better education for their kids would hence move out of those unfunded areas, leaving the families that do not have this financial capability trapped. This economical sorting, as we have discussed in the previous section, further leads to racial and ethnic segregation in different states or school districts. Specifically, Black/African-American and Hispanic/Latinx students are twice as likely as White students to be enrolled in unfunded districts.²¹ Consequently, White students gather in well-funded areas with higher educational quality while others are inadequately funded with not as much resources or access to high-level courses. Influential court cases have also increased racial isolation in schools.

One Supreme Court case that accelerated re-segregation after *Brown* is the *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1* (2007). This case ruled that using a racial tiebreaker to balance each school's racial composition is unconstitutional, and instead stated that schools are permitted to "voluntarily" integrate.²² Restricting the use of race as a tiebreaker in the aim of diversity could cause a direct reinforcement of the opposite. This ruling also overturned the precedent established in *Brown* that requires all schools to implement integration policies. While *Brown* stated that districts that abandoned desegregation policies would face serious legal consequences, the ruling of *Parents Involved v. Seattle* reverses that mandate. The government is given the discretion to abandon such efforts, permitting de facto segregation to persist.

The ruling of *Parents Involved v. Seattle* is a representative implementation of colorblind policy. Such policies often advocate treating people without regard to their race or ethnicity, aiming to promote equality of all races. However, these policies often do not achieve their initiative goal but instead hinder integration. Research has indicated that the colorblind policies correlate with the exacerbation of racial and ethnic isolation in public education.²³ These policies overlook the deep-rooted social structural and long-term historical racial disparities we have been facing. Hence while aiming to promote parental choice and accountability, they inevitably fall into the trap of the already existing residential patterns and economic sorting and allow parents to select schools that

¹⁸ "The Racial Makeup of a School's AP Classes May Perpetuate Within-School Segregation | Housing Matters," March 8, 2023, <https://housingmatters.urban.org/research-summary/racial-makeup-schools-ap-classes-may-perpetuate-within-school-segregation>.

¹⁹ "1954."

²⁰ Bruce D. Baker et al., *THE ADEQUACY AND FAIRNESS OF STATE SCHOOL FINANCE SYSTEMS*, annual research report (2021), https://www.schoolfinancedata.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/SFID2022_annualreport.pdf.

²¹ Baker et al., *THE ADEQUACY AND FAIRNESS OF STATE SCHOOL FINANCE SYSTEMS*.

²² "Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School Dist. No. 1, 551 U.S. 701 (2007)," Justia Law, accessed August 13, 2025, <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/551/701/>.

²³ Amy Stuart Wells, *SEEING PAST THE "COLORBLIND" MYTH OF EDUCATION POLICY*, n.d.

are not racially diverse. It is therefore crucial for us to reflect on the roots that contribute to the failure of these kinds of colorblind policies and strive for better solutions to address racial isolations.

Brown v. Board of Education, as a cornerstone of desegregation policies, gradually reduced de jure racial segregation in school in the years following its ruling. However, this enforcement of oversight did not last. Since the early 21st century, the federal oversight had been weakened by different Supreme Court cases, such as *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1* (2007) discussed earlier and the rollback of desegregation policies. One demonstrative example of which is the recent ending of the 1966 legal agreement.²⁴ This agreement had been a decades-old desegregation order which integrated the Plaquemines Parish School district.²⁵ The rollback of such a desegregation policy opens the door for the deepening of racial isolations that is already worsening due to residential and economic segregation.

If we continue to let the issue persist and permit the withdrawal of more desegregation orders, racial disparities in education will likely become further entrenched. *Brown* had been a landmark case that symbolized justice during the Civil Rights Movement. It established the basis for federal enforcement and oversight that functions to ensure equality of students of all races in educational environments. Stepping into a new era, we have seen the success of civil rights and integration, and hence the responsibility to protect them remains critical to our future education.

4) School Zone Boundaries

School zone boundaries are one of the most influential factors that contribute to the entrenchment of racial isolations in schools. District lines sort students by geographic area; unreasonable drawing of school zones is a kind of political manipulation that prevents students from accessing more diverse and better resourced educational environments. A 2023 simulation study found that redrawing attendance zones leads to a median 14% decrease in racial segregation, highlighting the significance of school districts in shaping racial segregation. Thoughtfully drawn districts would hence substantially improve the current disparities. This section is going to discuss the factors relevant to poorly drawn schools zones deepening racial isolation in schools, including gerrymandered district lines, fragmentation of districts, gentrification after fragmentation, and transportation barriers for low-income families.

District lines are often subject to gerrymandering. They are often drawn racially and socioeconomically unevenly, perpetuating historical disparities in modern school systems. District lines split wealthier and predominantly white neighborhoods from minority communities, thereby concentrating resources and opportunities in certain schools while leaving others underfunded and segregated. Researchers showed that many of these boundary lines are the vestiges of the historically entrenched roots of racism, explicitly segregating people by race and ethnicity.²⁶ One example of these vestiges is the explicit residential zoning ordinances since the 1900s that prohibited African Americans from living in predominantly White blocks.²⁷ The resultant boundary between districts is called a redline. These redlines, established before *Brown v. Board of Education* was reflected in our current school districts, further reinforcing racial and economic segregation in schools. Over time, these district lines become not only boundaries to separate people by their socioeconomic status, but also gatekeepers of wealth accumulation, job opportunities, and school access that contributes to intergenerational inequality. Imbalance in educational qualities are therefore exacerbated by these inequalities rooted in the society, and students are restricted by these boundaries from accessing better education. High-poverty districts continue to struggle in poorly funded educational environments and low-poverty districts concentrate wealth and resources to provide high-quality education.

Districts are also increasingly fragmented. Wealthy families gather in wealthy neighborhoods while leaving poor families in poor neighborhoods, which is a gradual but inevitable process. Many of the inequality

²⁴ Collin Binkley, "The Justice Department Ended a Decades-Old School Desegregation Order. Others Are Expected to Fall," AP News, May 1, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/school-segregation-order-civil-rights-justice-department-7fc5e2e4ef8e9ad4a283f563c042ae7c>.

²⁵ "Office of Public Affairs | Justice Department Dismisses Half Century Old Louisiana Consent Decree | United States Department of Justice," April 29, 2025, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-dismisses-half-century-old-louisiana-consent-decree>.

²⁶ Tomas Monarrez and Carina Chien, *Racially Unequal School Boundaries in US Public School Systems*, n.d.

²⁷ George Fatheree, "A Brief History of Racial Zoning and How to Reverse the Lasting Effects of Housing Discrimination," *Urban Land*, February 20, 2024, <https://urbanland.uli.org/a-brief-history-of-racial-zoning-neighborhood-associations-and-municipal-zoning>.

cycles start here, rooted in this unequal residential sorting. When we look deeper into the reasons behind this phenomenon, we find that the secession of small groups of wealthy residents from larger districts plays a major role. This phenomenon is called district secession. Researchers have explained that when this small group of predominantly White, wealthy people realizes that their school district does not meet their expectations, they choose to separate from it. They then move to more well-funded districts that require better economic status but are able to provide students with higher-quality education. Others without this capability to move thus remain in the original districts, making it more disadvantaged and less racially diverse over time.²⁸ This migration is driven by the pursuit of better education and is enabled by one's economic status. It forms a self-reinforcement sorting mechanism that separates districts socioeconomically. High-income populations gather in districts with the high-quality education that they expect, while low-income populations are trapped in districts with inadequate educational environments. Indeed, data suggest that counties that have experienced district secession show a higher level of residential segregation afterward.²⁹ This cycle of fragmentation eventually entrenches both racial and socioeconomic segregation, prolonging inequality in educational opportunities that are passed down across generations.

One other factor that directly follows fragmentation is gentrification. For the purpose of this essay, gentrification is defined as the process by which wealthy families move into low-income neighborhoods, significantly raising the cost of living and property values of those neighborhoods and making it extremely tough for the families who originally lived there to remain. Specifically, the consumption and investment of high-income families in those low-income areas reunite the economy but at the same time deepen income inequality. Low-income families no longer have the financial capacity to keep living in such neighborhoods and are often forced to move. Due to economic disparity based on race and ethnicity, many of these displaced low-income families are Hispanic and Black people. Researchers have shown that over 20,000 Black residents were displaced in Washington, D.C., and around 13% were displaced over decades in Portland, Oregon. This process of gentrification further accelerates racial isolation, as not only do wealthy communities continue to concentrate, but they also gradually erode and marginalize low-income communities, pushing them out of large cities with vibrant economies. As a result, minority students have lost access to the educational resources once provided in these economically prosperous city centers.

In addition to the district lines that divide people by income and block people from accessing educational resources of other districts, the lack of physical transportation for many families is another practical obstacle to attending better schools. Low-income families are often unable to provide private transportation for their kids if their desired school - high-quality schools often located in wealthy school districts - is not within the area they can afford to travel to; without school bus options, they are thus forced to forgo their desired schools. According to a random survey completed by researchers, over a quarter of respondents did not enroll their students in their desired schools due to transportation difficulties, and two-thirds reported that if transportation were available, they would send their children to farther but better schools.³⁰ Data from this survey indicate the considerable proportion of people are excluded from high-quality education due to their inability to afford transportation to farther schools. Thus geographic issues also directly impact racial isolation.

Essentially, this inability still comes from the economic disparities. Schools often considered “good” due to having more resources and opportunities are located in wealthy school districts, which are disproportionately White and better funded.³¹ These schools are therefore often geographically far from low-income families, often from minority communities, who live in less affluent school districts; their choices of schools are largely restricted and they are compelled to remain in low-income districts. Gradually these families without the financial capability to travel for schools accumulate in the original high-poverty school districts where they live, and their future generations also continue to be confined there. This cycle entrenches racial segregation in education over time.

²⁸ Eric A. Houck and Brittany C. Murray, “Left Behind: District Secession and the Re-Segregation of American Schools,” *Peabody Journal of Education* 94, no. 4 (2019): 388–402.

²⁹ “Does School District Secession Accelerate School Segregation? | Housing Matters,” May 26, 2021, <https://housingmatters.urban.org/research-summary/does-school-district-secession-accelerate-school-segregation>.

³⁰ Paul Teske et al., *Drivers of Choice: Parents, Transportation, and School Choice*, policy research report (2009), https://crpe.org/wp-content/uploads/pub_dscr_teske_jul09_0.pdf.

³¹ Figure 2. *Real Median Household Income by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1967 to 2022*.

II. CONCLUSION:

Racial and ethnic data collected from public schools reveal the ongoing racial isolation of students in our society. This isolation is aggravated by current societal trends such as population shifts and peer isolation effects. Income disparity is another important factor directly associated with racial isolation in schools. Specifically, socioeconomic status is highly correlated with racial and ethnic background. Ineffective policies and the lack of enforcement of integration also promote the persistence of racial isolation in both schools and residential zones. Finally, school zone barriers that separate majority and minority racial groups further entrench segregation and limit opportunities for true integration.

Therefore, the continued deepening of de facto racial isolation in our educational system is driven by several interacting factors, including racial composition, economic disparities, policy influences, and district line boundaries. Specifically, the income disparities varying among different racial groups contribute directly to the similarity between income level and racial division, making certain racial or ethnic groups generally wealthier than others. This racial segregation caused by income disparities is further reinforced by the residential sorting, where wealthy racial groups concentrate in affluent school districts and others remain in high-poverty districts. Moreover, policy decisions that overrule the result of Brown v. Board of Education perpetuate racial isolation. Isolating students by race undermines justice and entrenches inequality in education. Students are unable to equitably access educational resources and opportunities. Classroom infrastructure and the abundance of advanced courses also vary across schools depending on economic status and racial composition, limiting the future development and life possibilities of minority students who are trapped in underfunded environments. Such possibilities may include reduced college access, lower graduation rates, and limited opportunities for high-salary employment.

In recognizing the serious consequences of racial isolation in schools, it is imperative for us to take action and implement equitable reforms. Moreover, further research is needed in order to explore less well-understood areas and guide policymakers toward sustainable solutions. On the basis of all factors mentioned in this essay, continued exploration in a specific area or the combination of multiple areas may be essential for creating effective and equitable policy practices. For example, the relationship between the development of gerrymandering in school districts and its contribution to majority-minority schools and related policies is a critical area that we do not have much information about but should be examined more deeply. Addressing all the factors explored in this essay that contribute to racial segregation requires a multi-faceted approach, combining policy reform, equitable funding, and improved access to transportation. Only by confronting all these factors can we break the cycle of inequality and move towards reforming an education system that truly serves students fairly and equitably.

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