



**Improving Outcomes for All Students:  
Strategies and Considerations to Increase Student  
Diversity**

**January 19, 2017**

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January 2017

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## I. Introduction

This brief provides information to support school districts and stakeholders seeking to improve student diversity in their schools through voluntary, community-led programs as part of an overall effort to increase equity and excellence for all students. Diversity can include many factors, such as race, national origin, disability, socioeconomic status, and language proficiency. What follows is an action-oriented summary of considerations when embarking on efforts to increase student diversity, starting with possible steps to consider when conducting a diversity needs assessment and planning for implementation. Potential diversity strategies and a few examples from the field are included, as well as thoughts on efforts to sustain an inclusive environment once diversity strategies are being implemented.

## II. Conducting a Diversity Needs Assessment and Planning for Implementation

A district may choose to conduct a diversity needs assessment with the goal of using various types of data to: identify a district's student population in broad terms, including students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, socioeconomic status, students with disabilities, and English learners (ELs); uncover inequities around access and outcomes for these and other groups of students; identify the greatest needs of these students; and identify program or policy actions aimed to address these needs. A diversity needs assessment may take into account a district's or region's current enrollment and full demographic context, as well as changes and projections over time, so that knowledge of trends can inform decision making. In addition, districts could consider making the resulting needs assessment publicly available, which may garner public support for the identified program or policy solutions.

Included below are steps districts could take when conducting a student diversity needs assessment.<sup>1</sup>

### Step 1: Build a Team with Broad Representation and Engagement from the Community

A successful plan should include community participation in order to build community ownership and ensure representation of diverse perspectives. It is important to identify key stakeholders that will be part of the team, including, for example, district and school personnel who represent a variety of areas of expertise, such as assessment and accountability, budgeting, curriculum and instruction, and, if applicable, Federal program administration. School-level staff, parents/guardians, and, as appropriate, students should be included as well. It is also important to include external stakeholders, such as business leaders, leaders of community organizations, family and youth service providers, and members of other public agencies on the team.

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<sup>1</sup> Several guides are available on needs assessments. Examples include: Southwest Comprehensive Center at WestEd, *A Guide for Comprehensive Needs Assessment*, (2008); Ryan Watkins, Distance Learning 11(4) (2014): 59-61; Ohio Department of Education, Ohio Improvement Process (OIP) Guide, (2012).

Beyond the members that will be part of the team, broader community engagement is necessary throughout the needs assessment process. Community engagement requires building a collective understanding of how diversity plans advance equity for the district and region as a whole, and why this is an important goal. This process is fundamentally about creating a way for the community to share resources, educational opportunities, and ownership more effectively for the benefit of all students and the community. It is an opportunity for the community to come together, and, therefore, the vision, messaging, and tenor of the conversation matter.<sup>2</sup> Hearing diverse perspectives can improve the district's understanding of the decisions parents/guardians struggle with regarding their children's education, and may prompt more innovative ideas for community-based solutions.<sup>3</sup>

Identifying and meeting with various stakeholders such as policymakers; scholars; and organizational, business, philanthropic, and faith leaders in the community is a crucial planning step because these partners likely provide essential resources (e.g., research and data, subject-matter expertise, volunteer support, meeting space, financial resources, and credible relationships with various community members). Working with local organizations or university-based centers can also be an effective way to develop community buy-in and public will. Opportunities for ongoing engagement can initiate, build, and sustain momentum. Archiving written summaries, video footage, holding meetings during non-regular business hours, and creating other targeted communications and resources, while also making these resources publicly accessible can create opportunities for stakeholders to enter the process once it is underway. Identifying concrete follow-up steps helps sustain momentum from initial engagement throughout planning and implementation.

Districts can use a variety of strategies to solicit meaningful, relevant feedback from all sectors of the community. Strategies could include community meetings, surveys, focus groups, print and video resources, community-wide dialogue/study circles, citizen committees, and the media.<sup>4</sup> It is important to make outreach materials and engagement opportunities accessible to all community members, including people with various education levels and language backgrounds as well as people with disabilities.<sup>5</sup> Examples of ways to engage communities over time include: (1) making engagement a priority and establishing an infrastructure, (2) communicating proactively in the community, (3) listening to the community and responding to feedback, (4) offering meaningful

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<sup>2</sup> See Adai Tefera, Erica Frankenberg, Genevieve Siegel-Hawley, and Gina Chirichigno, *Integrating Suburban Schools: How to Benefit From Growing Diversity and Avoid Segregation* (UCLA Civil Rights Project, 2011). This manual provides examples of engagement efforts that communities and school districts have used to build and sustain public support for integration.

<sup>3</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>5</sup> The Department provides publications on stakeholder communication and engagement, including an assessment rubric and facilitator's guide and social media tip sheets. These resources are [available](#) on the Department's website. The Department's Office for Civil Rights also has guidance on effective communication for [students with disabilities](#) and in particular effective communication with English Learner Students and Limited English Proficient Parents ([Dear Colleague Letter](#) and [Fact Sheet](#)).

opportunities to participate, and (5) turning community members into leaders and advocates.<sup>6</sup>

External resources can also be tapped for essential content expertise, but it is important to keep the planning process accessible to local stakeholders. Diversity efforts that are driven — or perceived as being driven — mostly by outside consultants may not garner the needed support necessary to succeed over time.

## Step 2: Identify and Collect Relevant Data

Efforts to increase diversity involve actively taking steps to bring students together from all backgrounds, including students from different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds, students with disabilities, and ELs. Defining what diversity means in the local context and how to measure it over time is crucial for the long-term success of these efforts. The team should identify and collect available data to determine the current level of diversity of the student population. To ensure data security and student privacy, policies and procedures to protect sensitive data must be in place. Furthermore, plans to increase student diversity must ensure compliance with all Federal laws, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act,<sup>7</sup> as well as state and local laws and regulations.

Data that could be considered in a student diversity needs assessment include:

- The Department’s Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) data, which include information about school demographics, course enrollment, discipline, and other topics, broken down by factors such as sex, disability, and race/ethnicity.<sup>8</sup>
- Student demographic and academic outcome data for the target schools and other schools in the district or metropolitan area.
- Test scores disaggregated by student groups;<sup>9</sup> however, test scores alone cannot give a full picture of access to a well-rounded, high-quality education.
- Data related to student access to resources (e.g., participation in advanced coursework, effective teachers, per pupil expenditures, instructional tools, and full-day prekindergarten).
- Interview, focus group, survey or observation data related to diversity needs or concerns.
- Data on the interface between race, ethnicity and/or socioeconomic status and students with disabilities and EL status.
- Records such as strategic planning documents, district improvement plans, and school board agendas.

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<sup>6</sup> Reform Support Network, *Strategies for Community Engagement in School Turnaround*, (2014); additional resources for community engagement from the Reform Support Network, [School Turnaround Community of Practice](#) [website].

<sup>7</sup> See generally 20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 C.F.R. § 99.1 et seq.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, [Civil Rights Data Collection](#) [website].

<sup>9</sup> Regarding inclusion of test scores in needs assessments, see e.g., Southwest Comprehensive Center at WestEd, *A Guide for Comprehensive Needs Assessment*, (2008).

- The methods currently used for student assignment, including the impact of school attendance boundaries on the diversity of a student population, both within and between districts.<sup>10</sup>
- Census data, which can be used to determine poverty, racial, or ethnic diversity in the district or metropolitan area.
- Data related to families' socioeconomic status, which is broadly defined as "one's access to financial, social, cultural, and human capital resources" and includes three core components: family income, parental educational attainment, and parental occupational status.<sup>11</sup> The 2015 *Forum Guide to Alternative Measures of Socioeconomic Status in Education Data Systems*<sup>12</sup> from the National Forum on Education Statistics is a useful resource for considering socioeconomic status measures beyond Free and Reduced Price Lunch Program data.<sup>13</sup>

### Step 3: Analyze Data

After identifying and collecting relevant data, the team could then analyze the data to identify current needs, gaps, and strengths of the student population. An example of how to present this type of summary data can be seen in one district's annual school-level diversity accountability report.<sup>14</sup>

A key inquiry will be the differences between current school or district demographics in relation to demographics in the region or even in the state. Of particular note are schools with high concentrations of poverty or traditionally underserved students, or schools with student populations that are disproportionately racially homogenous.

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<sup>10</sup> Regarding the effect of school district boundaries on school diversity, see Jennifer Jellison Holme, Kara S. Finnigan, and Sarah Diem, *Challenging Boundaries, Changing Fate? Metropolitan Inequality and the Legacy of Milliken*, Teachers College Record 118, no. 3, (2016), 1–40.

<sup>11</sup> National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), *Improving the Measurement of Socioeconomic Status for the National Assessment of Educational Progress: A Theoretical Foundation*, Expert Panel Recommendations, (November 2012).

<sup>12</sup> Due to the complexity of measuring socioeconomic status, the National Forum on Education Statistics recommends that none of these is used as the sole measure. For more information, see the National Forum on Education Statistics, *Forum Guide to Alternative Measures of Socioeconomic Status in Education Data Systems*, (2015).

<sup>13</sup> For additional information on the National School Lunch Program visit the United States Department of Agriculture, [National School Lunch Program](#), [website]. Historically, the education community has measured socioeconomic status based on eligibility for free and reduced-price meals through Free and Reduced Price Lunch Program data, but the measure is becoming less helpful as an indicator of individual economic need due to the Community Eligibility Provision, a 2010 amendment made to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act designed to provide more students in need with access to free meals (National Forum on Education Statistics, 2015). The provision "permits eligible schools to provide meal service to all students at no charge, regardless of economic status," by "eliminating the need to obtain eligibility data from families." Therefore, if a school has a large enough concentration of students living at or near poverty levels (as measured by eligibility for other needs-based assistance), more nuanced data about parent/guardian income may not be easily available for schools utilizing the Community Eligibility Provision.

<sup>14</sup> See New York City Department of Education, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, "[Demographic Reports](#)," [website], which includes demographic reports for the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years, as required by a 2015 city law. See New York City Council, Law No. 2015/059, *Requiring the Department of Education to Report Annually on Student Demographics in Community School Districts and High Schools*, 2015.



In addition, analyzing data over time can help to identify trends. For example, comparing data across the past five years can help identify which schools are trending toward greater diversity and which are becoming more demographically isolated. This can help inform the development of diversity programs and strategies. It is important to note that the information related to student diversity should be looked at holistically to compare not only differences between schools on the basis of income or demographics, but also whether those differences are correlated with significant differences in student achievement or access to educational resources, including, for example, effective educators.

#### Step 4: Determine the Appropriate Diversity Strategies

After analyzing data, the team should then set a diversity goal that is based on the data analysis. It is important to define diversity goal(s) before moving into selecting strategies to achieve the goal(s). The diversity strategies should be based on, at least, data analysis, available evidence,<sup>15</sup> and local context. It is important to note that when developing a plan to increase student diversity, if a district chooses to consider the race or ethnicity of students, it should consult the “Guidance on the Voluntary Use of Race to Achieve Diversity and Avoid Racial Isolation in Elementary and Secondary Schools” released by the Department’s Office for Civil Rights and the U.S. Department of Justice.<sup>16</sup> The guidance details the “flexibility that the Supreme Court has provided to . . . elementary and secondary schools [to] reduce racial isolation among students within the confines of the law.”<sup>17</sup> As districts consider diversity strategies, they should consult legal counsel when considering which approaches might be best suited to a particular situation and are in alignment with the needs and goals identified by their needs assessment. Some examples of diversity strategies are included in the third section of this brief.

#### Local Context Considerations

##### Funding

The availability and distribution of financial resources within and among districts can have an impact on diversity strategy selection. For example, districts may wish to consider weighted student funding as a way to distribute resources. This method involves differentiating the per-pupil allocation based on student need, and may help increase equity by incentivizing schools to compete for students in poverty.<sup>18</sup> In weighted student funding, all students receive a base weight, and then weights are added based on expected additional supports different student groups may need.<sup>19</sup> Poverty is one student characteristic that could be weighted, thereby providing additional funds to a school that

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<sup>15</sup> See the U.S. Department of Education, *Using Evidence to Strengthen Educational Investments*, (September 2016).

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Justice, *Guidance on the Voluntary Use of Race to Achieve Diversity and Avoid Racial Isolation in Elementary and Secondary Schools*, (December 2011).

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Department of Education, “New Guidance Supports Voluntary Efforts to Promote Diversity and Reduce Racial Isolation in Education (Archived Press Release),” (December 2011).

<sup>18</sup> For one summary of weighted student funding, see Education Resource Strategies, *Weighted Student Funding*, [website].

<sup>19</sup> Education Resource Strategies, *Weighted Student Funding*, [PowerPoint presentation slide 4] (2012).

has high-poverty students enrolled. The exact model may vary based on a district's unique needs.

Student and school funding also play a role in any proposed inter-district program. If there is an existing system of inter-district school choice, districts should examine how funds are allocated to sending and receiving schools/districts. Districts should also look at whether there are any financial incentives in place for districts to accept students from outside their attendance zones. For regional inter-district schools of choice, this means sufficient funding in order to attract a diverse set of students from across districts. For inter-district transfer programs, this may involve adequately compensating receiving districts for accepting new non-resident children.

### *Housing and Transportation*

Because school demographics are closely associated with residential diversity patterns,<sup>20</sup> optimal planning for school diversity usually includes collaboration with housing agencies, as recommended in recent joint guidance from the Department, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Department of Transportation.<sup>21</sup> Important considerations include state or local decisions on siting of publicly assisted housing, the administration of Federal Housing Choice Vouchers,<sup>22</sup> and planning and zoning restrictions on the entry of mixed income and affordable housing into predominantly white, higher income districts and school zones.<sup>23</sup> Affordable housing siting decisions are best made with knowledge of anticipated housing development and the potential impacts on future school composition.<sup>24</sup>

Transportation is also an essential element of a school diversity policy.<sup>25</sup> Some important considerations for school siting are the methods of transportation students will use to attend school, access to transportation, transportation costs, and student transport time. City-to-suburban and suburban-to-city transfer programs, or schools of choice that draw from a wide geographic area, may require late buses and other transportation options to enable all students to participate in extracurricular activities. Transportation for students to participate in extracurricular activities can also increase their engagement,

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<sup>20</sup> See U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research, *Breaking Down Barriers: Housing, Neighborhoods, and Schools of Opportunity*, (2016).

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Transportation, *Dear Colleague Letter*, Washington, DC, (June 2016).

<sup>22</sup> For strategies related to school integration and housing choice vouchers, see the Mobility Works consortium's [Housing Mobility](#) website.

<sup>23</sup> For examples of collaborative housing and education policies, see the National Coalition on School Diversity, *Linking Housing and School Integration Policy: What Federal, State and Local Governments Can Do*, Brief No. 5, (March 2015).

<sup>24</sup> Regarding how residential segregation is related to school segregation, see Erica Frankenberg, *The Role of Residential Segregation in Contemporary School Segregation*, *Education and Urban Society* 45(5), (2013): 548-570. Regarding the dynamics of school integration in today's legal context, see; Erica Frankenberg and Chinh Q. Le, *The Post-Parents Involved Challenge: Confronting Extralegal Obstacles to Integration*, *Ohio State Law Journal*, 69 (2008): 1015-72.

<sup>25</sup> See, e.g., Jennifer J. Holme and Amy S. Wells, *School Choice Beyond District Borders: Lessons for the Reauthorization of NCLB from Interdistrict Desegregation and Open Enrollment Plans*, in *Improving on No Child Left Behind*, edited by Richard Kahlenberg, (2008): 174-76.

sense of belonging, and cross-cultural interactions. In addition, in some districts, providing transportation has helped significantly increase access among inter-district transfer programs.<sup>26</sup> The team may also wish to consider a transportation plan that supports parent engagement among families that do not have reliable access to a car as an important factor during the diversity planning process. In creating transportation plans, districts should also seek input from relevant stakeholders.

### **Laws and Regulations**

Some strategies for increasing school diversity are inextricably linked to local and state laws and regulations. For example, use of an inter-district transfer strategy may depend on state laws that permit transfers across district lines without penalty or hardship to the child who is transferring or to the school from which the student is transferring. In addition, state statutes can provide direction on whether cross-district transfers are permitted,<sup>27</sup> and whether, for example, free student transportation is limited to transportation within school districts.

### **Step 5: Develop a Plan to Implement and Monitor Results**

After determining which diversity strategy or strategies to pursue, the team should develop an implementation plan that includes student diversity benchmarks (see “Measuring Success” later in this brief) and clear roles and responsibilities for each team member, and if applicable, other involved stakeholders. It is also important to identify areas to monitor in order to ensure the policies/programs are having the desired impact. For example, “equity audits” could be regularly conducted to ensure that the targeted percentages of identified groups, such as low-income and very low-income children, are enrolling in their “schools of choice” in order to intentionally monitor diversity within the student body. If an audit shows that a school is falling short, remedial actions could be triggered, for example, by selecting children off the school waitlists based on family income level to reduce socioeconomic isolation.<sup>28</sup>

### **The Importance of Community Engagement and Awareness**

Community engagement is not a single step, but rather an ongoing process that drives and informs the work.<sup>29</sup> Through the actions of informing, inquiring, and involving

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<sup>26</sup> Kara S. Finnigan, Jennifer Jellison Holme, Myron Orfield, Tom Luce, Sarah Diem, Allison Mattheis, and Nadine D. Hylton, *Regional Educational Policy Analysis: Rochester, Omaha, and Minneapolis’ Inter-District Arrangements*, Educational Policy 29 (2014): 780–814.

<sup>27</sup> State law regarding district lines can affect student diversity. For example, in Connecticut, the state Supreme Court in 1996 found state laws requiring school districts to be organized by town line, and requiring students to attend school in their local district, to be the proximate cause of the intense racial and economic segregation in the Hartford region. At that time, the only cross-district transfers permitted were for tuition-paying children accepted by a neighboring school district, with no transportation provided. See Karen Taylor, *On Behalf of All Our Children: The 1996 Appeal of Sheff v. O’Neill*, Cities, Suburbs & Schools Project at Trinity College, (2013).

<sup>28</sup> For an example of how one community has used equity audits to promote integration, see Carole Learned-Miller, *Dallas Independent School District: Integration as Innovation*, (2016).

<sup>29</sup> For more information about community engagement, see U.S. Department of Education, *Dear Colleague Letter*, (June 2016).

the community, schools and districts can inspire stakeholders to support and sustain reform efforts, as well as educate families about school choice options.<sup>30</sup> Much of the discussion above in Step 1 about community engagement and awareness also applies throughout the diversity planning and implementation process. Public awareness and engagement are crucial to the design, implementation, and effectiveness of diversity initiatives and to facilitate community-based solutions. To ensure that a plan is well-designed and supported over time, districts can provide community members with ways to express their experiences, concerns, and aspirations. It is equally important to build parent and guardian awareness around available school choices, the benefits of different school options, and the processes for participating in these opportunities.

Once diversity efforts are in motion, districts should make information about schools; programs; choice options; and the application, admission and enrollment process accessible to all families, including making sure the information is clear, correct and available in multiple forms (e.g., online, by phone, in print) and in languages other than English, when applicable. A district could also consider creating a team at the district level whose purpose is recruiting and enrolling diverse students.<sup>31</sup> Also, consider how the options are marketed; for example, sometimes information and outreach may need to involve countering negative stereotypes of schools and communities.<sup>32</sup>

### Measuring Success

Though the definition of success is multifaceted and likely to evolve over time, the following are possible measures to consider.

**Diversified student demographics:** While diversity benchmarks differ depending on local demographics, assessing progress against agreed-upon student demographic benchmarks throughout implementation is important.

**Improved access to academic opportunities:** Achieving a diverse student population does not guarantee equity. Even within diverse schools, certain groups of students may be tracked into lower-level classes.<sup>33</sup> Certain groups of students may also be disciplined at disproportionate rates.<sup>34</sup> Examining and acting on data showing changes to

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<sup>30</sup> U.S. Department of Education, *From 'Inform' to 'Inspire': A Framework for Communications and Engagement*, ([n.d.](#)).

<sup>31</sup> For an example of how one community utilized such a team, see the [Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation](#) program website; See Amy Stuart Wells, Bianca J. Baldridge, Jacquelyn Duran, Courtney Grzesikowski, Richard Lofton, Allison Roda, Miya Warner and Terrenda White, *Boundary Crossing for Diversity, Equity and Achievement: Interdistrict School Desegregation and Educational Opportunity*, Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice ([2009](#)).

<sup>32</sup> For an example of this type of marketing, see *The Problem We All Live With*, This American Life [National Public Radio program transcript], (August 7, [2015](#)).

<sup>33</sup> Samuel R. Lucas, Mark Berends, *Race and Track Location in U.S. Public Schools*, *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, 25(3) (2007), 169-187; Roslyn Arlin Mickelson, *The cumulative disadvantages of first- and second-generation segregation for middle school achievement*, *American Educational Research Journal*, 52(4), ([2015](#)): 667-692.

<sup>34</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, *2013-14 Civil Rights Data Collection: A First Look*, (Revised October 28, [2016](#)).

participation in advanced coursework, access to extracurricular activities, chronic absenteeism, achievement gaps, discipline rates, special education identification rates, and support and access to resources such as technology and school counselors, can serve as indicators of progress towards diversity goals.

**Improved school climate:** As defined by the National Center on Safe and Supportive Learning Environments, “[s]chool climate is a broad, multifaceted concept that involves many aspects of the student’s educational experience. A positive school climate is the product of a school’s attention to fostering safety; promoting a supportive academic, disciplinary, and physical environment; and encouraging and maintaining respectful, trusting, and caring relationships throughout the school community.”<sup>35</sup> More expansive data systems and new measurement around school climate and safety<sup>36</sup> and social and emotional skills are useful to understand how students may be experiencing increased diversity. Measuring school climate will allow the school to better understand if students feel safer, more engaged, and more trusting as the student diversity plan proceeds.

**Improved academic outcomes:** Annual school report cards provide data on a range of measures, and under the Every Students Succeeds Act (ESSA) they will provide even more nuanced pictures of how students and schools are doing.<sup>37</sup> The annual report cards can be one tool to keep the public informed about student academic outcomes. There is evidence from districts that suggests that diversity efforts can improve state and national test scores,<sup>38</sup> increase high school graduation rates,<sup>39</sup> and reduce opportunity and achievement gaps between students of different races and socioeconomic levels.<sup>40</sup>

**Improved long-term life outcomes:** Some of the most significant impacts of successful policies to increase school diversity may be measured in terms of decades, as the impact accumulates over time. A recent study investigated the long-term impacts of court-ordered school desegregation by analyzing data on the life trajectories of people born

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<sup>35</sup> National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments, [School Climate](#), [website].

<sup>36</sup> See the [Department’s School Climate Surveys suite of tools and resources](#).

<sup>37</sup> For more information about the report card requirements under Title I, Part A of the ESEA and implementing regulations in 34 C.F.R. §§ 200.30 through 200.37, see the U.S. Department of Education, *Every Student Succeeds Act State and Local Report Cards Non-Regulatory Guidance*, (2014).

<sup>38</sup> For evidence of these improved outcomes in Cambridge, MA, see Halley Potter and Kimberly Quick, with Elizabeth Davies, *A New Wave of School Integration: Districts and Charters Pursuing Socioeconomic Diversity*, (The Century Foundation, 2016).

<sup>39</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>40</sup> For evidence of these improved outcomes in Hartford, CT, see, e.g., Robert Bifulco, Casey D. Cobb, and Courtney Bell, *Can Interdistrict Choice Boost Student Achievement? The Case of Connecticut’s Interdistrict Magnet School Program*, Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis 31, no. 4 (2009): 323–45. (“Results indicate that attendance at an interdistrict magnet high school has positive effects on the math and reading achievement of central city students and that interdistrict magnet middle schools have positive effects on reading achievement.”); Sarah S. Ellsworth, *CREC Student Achievement Overview 2013*, Capital Region Education Council Office of Data Analysis, Research and Technology, (2013); Connecticut State Department of Education, *Evaluating the Academic Performance of Choice Programs in Connecticut: A Pretest-Posttest Evaluation Using Matched Multiple Quasi-Control Comparison Groups*, (2015).



between 1945 and 1968, and followed through 2013.<sup>41</sup> Compared to black students who attended racially isolated schools and their older siblings who attended segregated schools, black students who attended schools under court-ordered desegregation had significantly greater academic achievement and educational and occupational attainment; increased adult earnings; a reduction in the probability of incarceration; and improved health outcomes.<sup>42</sup> To demonstrate some of these positive long-term outcomes, state longitudinal data systems are needed to track student data from preschool through the workforce.<sup>43</sup> While all states have made efforts in this area, additional focus at the state level may be needed to facilitate merging of separate data systems from K-12 schools, postsecondary systems, and the labor market in order to track long-term outcomes.<sup>44</sup>

### III. Strategies and Considerations for Promoting Diversity

There are many communities across the United States implementing student diversity strategies.<sup>45</sup> These communities employ a blend of strategies, some of which are outlined below. There are also a few examples of districts engaged in student diversity work that may be helpful to other districts that are beginning these efforts. Understanding the distinct details of these policies or programs and experiences of leaders in specific locales will help to ensure that all aspects of policy design and implementation are considered as part of the planning process. These examples provide only brief overviews of potential strategies, and do not detail all the challenges faced and benefits realized by communities.

#### Diversity Strategies to Consider

##### Magnet Schools

Typically magnet schools are schools of choice that have a desegregation focus and a special curriculum. For example, the Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP), reauthorized by the ESSA, defines a “magnet school” to mean a school “that offers a special curriculum capable of attracting substantial numbers of students of different racial backgrounds.”<sup>46</sup> MSAP funded magnet schools are “part of an approved desegregation plan” and are designed to “bring students from different social, economic, ethnic, and racial backgrounds together.”<sup>47</sup> Programs funded under MSAP may be designed to provide an

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<sup>41</sup> Rucker Johnson, *Long-Run Impacts of School Desegregation and School Quality on Adult Attainments*, National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper No. 16664, (January 2011).

<sup>42</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>43</sup> See the State Longitudinal Data Systems, *SLDS Issue Brief: Best Practices for Calculating Employment and Earnings Metrics*, (November 2016); and see the *State Longitudinal Data Systems, SLDS Issue Brief: Strategies for Data System Sustainability*, (June 2016).

<sup>44</sup> For statewide longitudinal data systems best practices and briefs, see the National Center for Education Statistics, [Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Grant Program Publications](#), [website].

<sup>45</sup> To see a summary of districts that are known to be pursuing socioeconomic integration strategies, see Richard Kahlenberg, “School Integration in Practice: Lessons from Nine Districts,” (2016).

<sup>46</sup> 20 U.S.C. 7231a

<sup>47</sup> 20 U.S.C. 7231b

academic or social focus with a particular theme (e.g., science/math, performing arts, gifted/talented, or foreign language).<sup>48</sup>

States and districts often use magnet schools and magnet programs as part of voluntary diversity efforts or remedial desegregation efforts (such as Federal court orders or state-mandated desegregation efforts). A 2009 report focusing on one state’s remedial inter-district magnet school system found that compared to non-magnet schools in the same cities, these schools were more diverse, reported more positive intergroup relations, and had positive effects on reading and math achievement.<sup>49</sup>

The MSAP includes a priority for applicants that “propose to select students to attend magnet school programs by methods such as lottery, rather than through academic examination.”<sup>50</sup> Weighted lotteries that give additional weight to individual students who are identified as part of a specified set of students, such as based on individual demographic characteristics or the characteristics of the students’ residential neighborhoods or assigned school, may also be considered as part of student admissions policies.<sup>51</sup> If a magnet school chooses to utilize competitive admission criteria, such as grade point averages (GPAs) or test scores, these may have segregating effects that could be mitigated through interviews, essays, and the consideration of diversity-focused factors.<sup>52</sup>

### Controlled Choice Systems

Controlled choice assignment systems provide families with options beyond their neighborhood school and seek to maintain a diverse student body across schools within a single district.<sup>53</sup> Controlled choice systems assign students to schools by considering the family’s school preferences and the district’s diversity goals.<sup>54</sup> Strategies used in controlled choice plans include use of weighted student selection lotteries and often include designating all schools as schools of choice (and requiring school choice application for all students) within a district rather than having students assigned to neighborhood schools. Controlled choice helps districts achieve diversity by altering the relationship between where a child lives and where a child attends school, and therefore could counteract underlying residential segregation in a community.<sup>55</sup> One study suggests that controlled choice, and other strategies that promote racial integration, may be a particularly cost-

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<sup>48</sup>See generally, 20 U.S.C. 7231(b).

<sup>49</sup> Casey D. Cobb, Robert Bifulco, and Courtney Bell, *Evaluation of Connecticut’s Interdistrict Magnet Schools*, The Center for Education Policy Analysis, University of Connecticut, (2009).

<sup>50</sup> 20 U.S.C. 7231e(3)

<sup>51</sup> Consider reviewing relevant guidance on weighted lotteries for charter schools by the U.S. Department of Education, *Charter Schools Program Title V, Part B of the ESEA Nonregulatory Guidance*, (updated January 2014).

<sup>52</sup> Erica Frankenberg and Genevieve Siegel-Hawley, *The Forgotten Choice? Rethinking Magnet Schools in a Changing Landscape*, UCLA Civil Rights Project, (2008).

<sup>53</sup> Halley Potter and Kimberly Quick, with Elizabeth Davies, *A New Wave of School Integration: Districts and Charters Pursuing Socioeconomic Diversity*, (The Century Foundation, 2016).

<sup>54</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>55</sup> [Ibid.](#)

effective strategy for improving educational equity, relative to other major systemic reforms.<sup>56</sup>

### Open Enrollment

Open enrollment (also called universal enrollment) allows students to transfer from their assigned school to a different public school of their choice, and may be used as either an intra- or inter-district strategy.<sup>57</sup> Some districts and states use a single (or universal) application for all public schools.<sup>58</sup> Controlled choice may provide more opportunities for the district to consider its diversity goals when making individual student assignments, while open enrollment generally allows any family to apply to any school for which a student is not zoned.

Strategies that can make it easier for families to effectively participate in open enrollment include an enrollment guide; school fairs or expos; and a single, universal application. Districts should also be aware of unintended consequences of open enrollment, such as a decrease in diversity at some schools. With inter-district choice, there is also the possibility that some schools may lose per-pupil income, as families may choose to send students to more affluent districts that may seem to have better resources and more opportunities.<sup>59</sup>

### High-Quality Charter Schools

Generally, a charter school is a public school that operates under a charter or contract between a public agency that is authorized to approve charters and a charter school developer, which may consist of groups of parents, teachers, community leaders or others who want to create alternatives and choice for public school students. A charter school must meet the terms of its charter, which usually includes improving student academic achievement, or risk having its charter revoked. In exchange for this increased accountability for results, a charter school is typically given expanded flexibility with respect to select statutory and regulatory requirements applicable to traditional public schools.<sup>60</sup> Charter schools are authorized under individual state charter school laws, which vary with regard to the requirements for establishing and operating charter schools in a given state.

States with a charter school law, and such states' charter school authorizers, can implement measures to prioritize student diversity and monitor how charter schools in that state are affecting diversity. For example, state legislatures can take steps to ensure

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<sup>56</sup> Douglas N. Harris, *Lost Learning, Forgotten Promises: A National Analysis of School Racial Segregation, Student Achievement, and "Controlled Choice" Plans*, Center for American Progress, (2006).

<sup>57</sup> Marga Torrence Mikulecky, *Open Enrollment is on the Menu—But Can You Order It?*, Education Commission of the States, (2013).

<sup>58</sup> Bethany Gross, Michael DeArmond, and Patrick Denice, *Common Enrollment, Parents, and School Choice: Early Evidence from Denver and New Orleans*, Reinventing Public Education, (2015).

<sup>59</sup> Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity, *Open Enrollment and Racial Segregation in the Twin Cities: 2000-2010* (2013); Center for Education Research and Policy at MassINC, *Mapping School Choice in Massachusetts: Data and Findings 2003*, (2003).

<sup>60</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, *2015-16 Civil Rights Data Collection: Master List of 2015 - 2016 CRDC Definitions*, (2016).



that charter schools are both high quality and diverse as part of the charter approval and renewal processes, and may consider permitting charter schools to enroll students across district boundary lines, with corresponding support for facilities and transportation. In addition, authorizers can actively seek to support “diverse-by-design” charter schools by requiring charter school developers to submit plans for achieving diversity (how they plan to operate a diverse school, how they plan to maintain a diverse school, how their proposed school design increases/affects diversity, etc.). Likewise, authorizers can prioritize diversity and think carefully about how the development of charter schools can improve student body diversity in both new charter schools and neighboring traditional public schools. In this vein, the Department’s fiscal year 2016 Charter Schools Program (CSP) competition for grants to State educational agencies (SEAs) included a selection criterion on oversight of authorized public chartering agencies, including the quality of an SEA’s plan to ensure that authorizers are focusing on racial and ethnic diversity in student bodies.<sup>61</sup> The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which reauthorized and amended the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), strengthened provisions on the quality of charter school authorizing. In addition, the ESEA, as amended by the ESSA, includes a priority for plans to operate or manage high-quality charter schools with racially and socioeconomically diverse student bodies.<sup>62</sup>

As public schools, charter schools must have open enrollment policies. To ensure equitable access, generally charter schools use lotteries for enrollment when there is greater demand than available seats, do not have attendance zones, and may be open to students throughout the district in which the school is located or to families in the surrounding districts.<sup>63</sup> Charter schools, like most traditional public schools, generally are not allowed to use admissions requirements to choose their students.<sup>64</sup>

A tool that charter schools can consider to help enroll a diverse student body is a weighted lottery. For details on what is permissible with respect to conducting a weighted lottery, charter schools should consult their authorizer, State charter law, and SEA—especially if they are receiving or plan to apply for a federal CSP grant. Charter schools that receive CSP funds are required to hold a lottery if they receive more applications for admission than can be accommodated. The ESEA, as amended by the ESSA, specifically authorizes charter schools receiving CSP funds to use weighted lotteries in favor of “educationally disadvantaged students” under certain conditions.<sup>65</sup> This may include students from low-income families, students with disabilities, migrant students, ELs, neglected or delinquent students, and homeless students.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> 81 FR 23463

<sup>62</sup> 20 U.S.C. 7221d(b)(5)(A)

<sup>63</sup> National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, *Model Law & State Rankings, Component 12: Clear Student Recruitment, Enrollment, and Lottery Procedures*, (2016).

<sup>64</sup> While there are exceptions for charter schools with unique missions and targeted populations, which operate under specific provisions of state charter school law, charter schools generally do not restrict admissions. All charter schools receiving Federal Charter School Program start-up grants are required to use a lottery in their admissions process if more students apply than the school can accommodate. See 20 U.S.C. 7221i(2)(H)(i).

<sup>65</sup> 20 U.S.C. 7221b(c)(3)(A).

<sup>66</sup> U.S. Department of Education, *Charter Schools Program Title V, Part B of the ESEA Nonregulatory Guidance*, (updated January 2014).

Additionally, the National Charter Schools Resource Center recently published *Intentionally Diverse Charter Schools: A Toolkit for School Leaders*<sup>67</sup> as a resource designed to help charter school leaders and their stakeholders design and implement intentionally diverse charter schools. It presents decisions and actions, along with specific examples of how to: measure student diversity; intentionally recruit and retain students; ensure that diversity is supported and experienced meaningfully at the individual, classroom, and schoolwide levels; and create and run schools that help all children thrive.

### Considerations for Any Diversity Strategy

When planning to implement a diversity strategy or set of strategies districts may want to consider the following during that planning process.

#### ***Determining Diversity Goals and School Capacity***

- Estimate diversity goals and capacity at each school before each school year, prior to the school selection process, to determine the number of students eligible to be placed at each school.
- Fix the total number of available seats for transfers at each school each year as a proportion of total instructional capacity. This can help districts avoid the temptation to overcrowd highly sought-after schools.
- Replicate oversubscribed schools in order to increase high-quality options.
- Incentivize families to choose undersubscribed schools by offering attractive options, such as priority enrollment for pre-K.<sup>68</sup>
- Incentivize high-performing schools to accept lower performing students to mitigate concerns about the impact on school accountability ratings.<sup>69</sup>

#### ***Family Engagement***

- Create (or bolster) family information centers to provide comprehensive details about programs and schools, and to assist families with the selection and registration process.
- Engage coordinating councils in the school improvement process to encourage cooperation between principals, teachers, parents and community members.<sup>70</sup>
- Make information about schools; programs; choice options; and the application, admission and enrollment process accessible to all families, including making the information clear, correct and available in multiple forms (e.g., online, by phone, in print), accessible to persons with disabilities, and in languages other than English, when applicable.

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<sup>67</sup> Nora Kern, *Intentionally Diverse Charter Schools: A Toolkit for Charter School Leaders*, Safal Partners, (2016).

<sup>68</sup> See Alves Educational Consultants Group, Ltd., *Proposal for Charlotte-Mecklenberg Board of Education Student Assignment Review Consulting Services*, (2016).

<sup>69</sup> Kara S. Finnigan and Jennifer Jellison Holme, *Regional Educational Equity Policies: Learning from Inter-district Integration*, Research Brief No. 9, The National Coalition on School Diversity, (2015).

<sup>70</sup> Adopted from Charles V. Willie and Michael J. Alves, "Chapter 2: Design and Implementation Strategies," in *Controlled Choice: A New Approach to School Desegregated Education and School Improvement*, New England Desegregation Assistance Center for Equity in Education, (1996).

- Target outreach efforts to ensure families from a broad demographic reach are informed about the strategies, including providing information in accessible formats and other languages, if needed.

### ***School Selection and Assignment Process***

- Encourage families to visit family information centers, schools and recruitment fairs to learn what various schools offer.
- Assign students to schools based on space available, ranked preferences, and diversity goals.
- Strategically locate schools in mixed-income neighborhoods to help attract diverse student populations.
- Consider parent/guardian income and geography (including zip code<sup>71</sup>) in a single-school weighted student lottery or in district-wide preferences.

### ***Priority Assignments***

- Grant priority to siblings to reduce travel and communication strain on families.
- Consider granting priority to students who live within close proximity in order to reduce transportation costs. However, if this policy conflicts with diversity goals, consider using a lottery to make assignments.

### ***Expanding from Intra-District to Inter-District***

- Determine what makes students eligible to participate in the inter-district opportunities.
- Determine how many seats are available at participating schools.
- Determine how funding will flow to and from the participating districts.<sup>72</sup>
- Provide financial incentives for suburban schools to accept transfer students to make participation in the inter-district choice programs more attractive for suburban districts.<sup>73</sup>

### **Examples from the Field**

One longstanding program allows students living in a large urban area to apply and be placed on a waitlist for attendance at a high performing suburban school.<sup>74</sup> The program has two goals: to offer school choice and to intentionally promote diversity.<sup>75</sup> The first step of the application process is for families to place their child's name on the waitlist. Once a spot becomes available, they are invited to attend information sessions and complete

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<sup>71</sup> High Tech High, [About High Tech High](#), [website].

<sup>72</sup> For examples of how charter schools can be used to address student diversity, see Halley Potter, *Charters Without Borders: Using Inter-district Charter Schools as a Tool for Regional School Integration*, The Century Foundation, (2015).

<sup>73</sup> Kara S. Finnigan and Jennifer Jellison Holme, *Regional Educational Equity Policies: Learning from Inter-district Integration*, Research Brief No. 9, The National Coalition on School Diversity, (2015).

<sup>74</sup> Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, *METCO Program Report*, (2016).

<sup>75</sup> [Ibid.](#)

documentation in order to be referred to a suburban district.<sup>76</sup> Districts offer placements based on available seats.<sup>77</sup> Districts prefer to enroll students in early grades, so the chances of acceptance may diminish over time. The program is popular with an active waiting list of over 10,000 students; in August 2015 63 percent students on the waitlist were African American and 24 percent were Hispanic.<sup>78</sup> The program's Student Services Department consists of four full-time employees, including a manager, two social workers, and a guidance counselor, as well as temporary part-time tutors, in order to provide comprehensive services to the students of color who attend mostly white schools.<sup>79</sup> Based on state assessment scores, a higher percentage of 10th grade students in the program were proficient in both English Language Arts and mathematics than students in the rest of the state.<sup>80</sup> Additionally, 93 percent of program participants that graduated high school indicated that they planned to attend an institution of higher education, and the four-year graduation rate for the 2014 cohort was 98 percent.<sup>81</sup>

Another district pursued a regional diversity solution to the community's needs through state legislation.<sup>82</sup> The school district, facing changing demographics and financial hardship, expanded its boundaries to match the city's boundaries, under state statutory authority. Following much debate and negotiation after the expansion of these boundaries, two bills were passed over two years<sup>83</sup> and included three main components: a socioeconomic-based transfer plan across 11 districts to promote diversity; a tax-base sharing plan to set a common levy on the combined property value across all 11 districts; and the creation of elementary learning centers to provide out-of-school supports to families.<sup>84</sup> It also encouraged the creation of inter-district magnet schools, called "focus schools", by providing per pupil funding incentives and funding to help construct the schools. The state statute also established a council with geographically proportionate representation that governs the program with input from the 11 area superintendents. Transportation, often a large expense, is funded by the state. A program evaluation found the program to be successful in terms of the indicators of school readiness, vocabulary, student achievement, parents learning English, student reading, parent stress reduction, and instructional coaching.<sup>85</sup> However, recent data also indicate less progress toward

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<sup>76</sup> The Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity, Inc., [Enroll Your Child Today](#), [website].

<sup>77</sup> Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, *METCO Program Report*, (2016).

<sup>78</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>79</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>80</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>81</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>82</sup> Jennifer J. Holme and Sarah Diem, *Regional Governance in Education: A Case Study of the Metro Area Learning Community in Omaha, Nebraska*, *Peabody Journal of Education*, 90, no. 1 (2015): 156–77.

<sup>83</sup> See Nebraska (Repealed) Laws 2007, [LB 641](#), § 54. 79-2106.; Nebraska Laws 2008, [LB 1154](#), § 13. 79-1211.

<sup>84</sup> Kara S. Finnigan, Jennifer J. Holme, Myron Orfield, Tom Luce, Sarah Diem, Allison Mattheis, and Nadine D. Hylton, *Regional Education Policy Analysis: Rochester, Omaha, and Minneapolis' Inter-District Arrangements*, *Educational Policy*, (2014).

<sup>85</sup> The programs are independently evaluated using the Hattie scale, which measures the magnitude of effect size as falling into one of three impact zones: minimal, modest, or successful. The findings are from the 2014-2015 program evaluation; see Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties, [Measuring Our Impact](#), [website].

creating greater diversity within participating schools.<sup>86</sup> The common levy was a source of friction among many of the districts and this component was repealed in 2016. Despite these challenges, this initiative demonstrates how a state, through careful planning, can transform its goal of achieving diversity into a regional issue, and rather than focusing on solutions limited to an urban environment, link larger regional efforts with economic development, health, and transportation.

A third district is working to increase diversity across school district boundary lines through voluntary inter-district transfer, which allows students to apply to the open-choice or magnet schools of their choice. For schools that are oversubscribed, students are placed in a lottery. In addition, schools in low-poverty districts are provided incentives to reserve slots for students from higher-poverty districts.<sup>87</sup>

Another community formally merged its urban and suburban school districts to operate a controlled school choice program, grouping its schools into geographic clusters. The groupings take into account multiple neighborhood characteristics in an effort to create a higher likelihood of diverse students in the schools. Families list their preferred schools within their assigned “cluster,” and diversity across schools is promoted through the weighting of various factors and considered in the development of the clusters.<sup>88</sup> Today, the district is one of the most diverse districts in the nation, and as of 2011, over 90 percent of parents believed diverse schools have educational benefits for students.<sup>89</sup>

Finally, one state developed a socioeconomic diversity pilot program that aims to increase student achievement in schools with a high poverty rate by encouraging greater socioeconomic diversity in these schools.<sup>90</sup> Districts apply for state-funded three-year grants for planning and implementation. There are eligibility requirements for the districts and the schools that are based on definitions in the Federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) program.<sup>91</sup> The pilot program’s grantees must implement one of three models: an individual magnet school model (“implementing cutting-edge academic programs in high demand by parents from a wide range of backgrounds in the district or relevant geographic area”); a coordinated grants model (for districts with 25 or more schools that wish to turn similar schools near each other into magnet schools as part of a systemic strategy); or a community innovation model (variations of the other two models given special community needs). Grantees of the diversity pilot program are expected to use choice-based admissions policies to promote diversity. Redistricting low-performing schools, either by changing district boundaries or by closing or consolidating schools, is another potential

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<sup>86</sup>Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties, *Annual Evaluation Report 2014-2015*, submitted to the Nebraska Legislature, (January [2016](#)).

<sup>87</sup> For more information about Hartford, CT’s efforts, see Kimberly Quick, *Hartford Public Schools: Striving for Equity through Interdistrict Programs*, The Century Foundation, (October [2016](#)).

<sup>88</sup> For more information about Louisville, KY’s efforts, see Kimberly Quick and Rebecca Damante, *Louisville, Kentucky: A Reflection on School Integration*, The Century Foundation, (September [2016](#)).

<sup>89</sup> Gary Orfield and Erica Frankenberg, *Experiencing Integration in Louisville: How Parents and Students See the Gains and Challenges*, The Civil Rights Project, ([2011](#))

<sup>90</sup> New York State Education Department, [Socioeconomic Integration Pilot Program](#), [website].

<sup>91</sup> For more information about the Federal School Improvement Grant Program, including regulations, see the U.S. Department of Education, [School Improvement Grants Program](#), [website].

strategy, though caution is required to ensure that changes do not result in increased segregation.<sup>92</sup>

Again, these are just a few examples of various ways districts around the country are working to increase school diversity, but this is by no means an exhaustive list. Each approach is specifically tailored to the unique needs of the students and of the community, and as such, there is no one-size-fits-all approach.

#### IV. Sustaining an Inclusive Environment

Achieving a diverse student population in a given school building is a major accomplishment, but additional efforts are important to avoid the replication of inequities and disparities in achievement and access within a school that has a diverse student population. The following are examples to consider.

##### Culturally Relevant Instruction

All students can benefit from instruction that builds on their experiences and improves cultural competency. For example, a 2016 study exploring the causal effects of ethnic studies piloted in a large urban school district found significant benefits for students at risk of dropping out of high school, including increased attendance, GPA, and credits earned.<sup>93</sup>

##### Detracking/Opening Access to Advanced Coursework within Schools

Low-income students often participate in Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs at lower levels than more affluent students.<sup>94</sup> As a way to close AP/IB access gaps, a district partnered with a national non-profit partner. The school board adopted a policy to automatically enroll students who scored *Proficient* on the state exam in AP/IB courses, and school leadership focused on building staff capacity to support students.<sup>95</sup> Over four years, the district increased the number of low-income students in upper-level courses by a factor of 2.5, while keeping exam pass rates stable.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Daphne Penn, *School Closures and Redistricting Can Reproduce Educational Inequality*, Center for Poverty Research Policy Brief 3, no. 5, (2014); and Genevieve Siegel-Hawley, Kimberly Bridges, and Thomas J. Shields, *Solidifying Segregation or Promoting Diversity? School Closure and Rezoning in an Urban District*, Educational Administration Quarterly (2016): 1–35.

<sup>93</sup> To see the study done in the San Francisco Unified School District, see Thomas Dee and Emily Penner, *The Causal Effects of Cultural Relevance: Evidence From an Ethnic Studies Curriculum*, CEPA Working Paper No. 16-01, Center for Education Policy Analysis, (2016).

<sup>94</sup> Christina Theokas and Reid Saaris, *Finding America's Missing AP and IB Students*, Shattering Expectations Series, The Education Trust, (2013); Philip Handwerk, Namrata Tognatta, Richard J. Coley, and Drew Gitomer, *Access to Success: Patterns of Advanced Placement Participation in U.S. High Schools*, Education Testing Service, (2008).

<sup>95</sup> Christina Theokas and Reid Saaris, *Finding America's Missing AP and IB Students*, Shattering Expectations Series, The Education Trust, (2013).

<sup>96</sup> Equal Opportunity Schools, *Successes*, [website].



### Diversifying the Teacher Workforce to Reflect a Diverse Student Body

An analysis of data from two large urban school districts found meaningful levels of teacher segregation, and suggested that teacher segregation is systematically related to student segregation.<sup>97</sup> A recent Department report highlights how improving teacher diversity can help all students.<sup>98</sup> It describes current initiatives that support teachers of color throughout the educator pipeline. For example, teacher preparation programs can recruit teachers of color, and schools and districts can support them through differentiated professional development and focused retention efforts.<sup>99</sup>

### Teacher Professional Development and Resources

Resources for teachers can be critical, especially as a district transitions to more inclusive policies and practices.<sup>100</sup> Professional development for school staff may be necessary to improve cross-cultural competency,<sup>101</sup> mitigate implicit biases, and align practices and policies.<sup>102</sup> Developing a positive school culture and climate, including addressing bullying and harassment, is important to help students feel safe and comfortable.<sup>103</sup> Teachers may also need to practice their communication skills in order to best connect with all families in a meaningful and productive manner.<sup>104</sup>

## VI. Conclusion

All students can benefit from opportunities to learn and interact with people whose backgrounds and perspectives differ from their own. Providing such opportunities requires planning, strategy, and follow-through at the district level, guided by a community-wide vision of the potential benefits to students and society at large. Indeed, as noted above, optimal planning for school diversity usually includes community collaboration across the education, housing, and transportation sectors, as recommended in recent joint federal

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<sup>97</sup> Kinga Wysienska-Di Carlo, Matthew Di Carlo, and Esther Quintero, *Teacher Segregation in Los Angeles and New York City*, Albert Shanker Institute, (2016).

<sup>98</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service, *The State of Racial Diversity in the Educator Workforce*, (2016).

<sup>99</sup> Audra Watson, Travis Bristol, Terrenda White, and José Luis Vilson, *Recruiting and Retaining Educators of Color*, Shanker Blog, (July 14, 2015).

<sup>100</sup> Kara S. Finnigan, Jennifer Jellison Holme, Myron Orfield, Tom Luce, Sarah Diem, Allison Mattheis, and Nadine D. Hylton, *Regional Educational Policy Analysis: Rochester, Omaha, and Minneapolis' Inter-District Arrangements*, Educational Policy 29 (2014): 780–814.

<sup>101</sup> For teacher resources around “reducing prejudice, improving intergroup relations and supporting equitable school experiences for our nation’s children,” see the Southern Poverty Law Center, [Teaching Tolerance](#), [website].

<sup>102</sup> Kara S. Finnigan, Lesli C. Myers, Shaun Nelms, and Kevin McGowan, *Confronting Race, Racism and Privilege in Schools*, District Administration, (July 2015); for potential teacher professional development resources, see Matt Davis, [Preparing for Cultural Diversity: Resources for Teachers](#), Edutopia, [website; last updated September 8, 2016].

<sup>103</sup> For resources that help schools create a safe and supportive learning environment, see the [National Center on Safe and Supportive Learning Environments](#) [website]; and for information specific to creating inclusive environments for students with disabilities, see the [Inclusive Schools Network](#) [website].

<sup>104</sup> The Harvard Family Research Project, [The Family Involvement Network of Educators](#), [website].

agency guidance.<sup>105</sup> This brief is intended as a resource for those engaged in such efforts, in particular, those seeking to promote school socioeconomic diversity. Districts and stakeholders can use this information to begin to think about how to increase diversity, equity, and excellence in their schools. The brief presents ideas on how to develop a diversity plan, what strategies to consider, and possible challenges in implementation. It includes examples of approaches taken by school districts across the nation. Ultimately, local school districts and in some cases, states, have important roles for making decisions about what strategies to pursue, effective ways to engage stakeholders, and how to define and measure school diversity.

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<sup>105</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Transportation, *Dear Colleague Letter*, Washington, DC, (June [2016](#)).