



# Interdistrict Desegregation Programs

Selection Criteria, Political and Community  
Engagement, Funding, and Urban Investment

# District Leadership Forum

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# 1) Executive Overview

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## Key Observations

**Voluntary desegregation program administrators may not be able to design selection processes based on the race of individual students due to legal implications.** According to the Supreme Court ruling on Seattle’s *PICS* and Louisville’s *McFarland* cases, desegregation programs should not make determinations about individual students based on students’ race unless absolutely necessary.<sup>1</sup> However, according to Justice Kennedy’s controlling opinion, educational institutions may continue to address desegregation through non-individualized race-neutral or race-conscious practices (e.g., drawing attendance zones in recognition of neighborhood demographics).<sup>2</sup> Though the legal landscape may shift, interdistrict desegregation programs such as **Program F** implement generalized racial selection criteria that appear to align with this decision.

**To achieve both racial and socioeconomic diversity, consider combining generalized racial selection criteria and socioeconomic selection criteria.** Contacts from **College of Education A** recommend that program administrators consider the integration effort of **Jefferson County Public Schools**, which combines census-block-level data on race, educational attainment, and income to place students into three categories (e.g., category one, category two) based on neighborhood socioeconomic and racial diversity.<sup>3</sup> Importantly, although the district’s selection process does consider the racial demographics of neighborhoods, it does not consider the race of individual students. Other programs rely solely on different sets of generalized racial criteria. Program administrators at **Program F** consider whether a student lives in a racially isolated neighborhood when assigning students to magnet schools.

**To increase urban district engagement, ask state legislators to allocate additional funds to replace funding that transfers with students from urban to suburban districts.** Contacts from **Program E** report that urban district administrators often oppose the interdistrict desegregation program because they believe that they lose extensive funding when students transfer to suburban districts. To respond to this problem, contacts at **College of Education A** and **Think Tank A** suggest that state legislators create policy to replace funds that follow participating students from urban districts to suburban districts. Through funding, legislators can prevent both urban resistance and decreases in the quality of education at urban districts. For example, at **Program D+**, the state legislature allows districts to retain funding when district students choose to attend magnet schools.<sup>4</sup>

**To create effective, two-way interdistrict desegregation programs, develop urban magnet schools designed to appeal to suburban parents.** Contacts from **Think Tank A** note that successful interdistrict desegregation programs must be two-way: students must move both from urban to suburban schools and from suburban to urban schools. Though multiple interdistrict desegregation programs incorporate urban magnet schools to attract suburban families, few magnet programs successfully appeal to suburban parents. Contacts from **Think Tank A** and **College of Education A** note that to successfully attract suburban families, program administrators should locate magnet schools near common workplaces for suburban parents, carefully select

1 Kevin G. Welner and Eleanor R. Spindler, “The Post-*PICS* Picture: Examining School Districts’ Policy Options for Mitigating Racial Segregation” in *From the Courtroom to the Classroom: The Shifting Landscape of School Desegregation*. Edited by Claire E. Smrekar and Ellen B. Goldring (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2009), 57.

2 Kevin G. Welner and Eleanor R. Spindler, “The Post-*PICS* Picture: Examining School Districts’ Policy Options for Mitigating Racial Segregation,” 57.

3 Kim Bridges, “Jefferson County Public Schools: From Legal Enforcement to Ongoing Commitment,” *The Century foundation*, October 14, 2016. <https://tcf.org/content/report/jefferson-county-public-schools/>

4 Program D/Program D+, “Frequently Asked Questions” provided April 24, 2019, 3-4.

school themes (e.g., Montessori, I.B.) to appeal to suburban interests, and form close school partnerships with prestigious urban institutions (e.g., universities, museums). Importantly, these magnet schools serve as investments in the infrastructure of urban districts, which may increase the engagement of urban districts.

**Interdistrict desegregation programs improve the academic and social outcomes of participating students but may not meaningfully impact regional segregation trends.** Research indicates that integrated schools improve the academic performance of students of all races, socioeconomic backgrounds, and grade-levels.<sup>5</sup> Research also indicates that students who attend integrated schools are more likely to form interracial friendships and work in integrated environments later in life.<sup>6</sup> Interdistrict desegregation programs give some students from urban and suburban districts access to these benefits.<sup>7</sup> However, because many interdistrict desegregation programs transport relatively few students, interdistrict desegregation programs often fail to meaningfully adjust regional demographic trends.

<sup>5</sup> Amy Stuart Wells, Lauren Fox, and Diana Cordova-Cobo, "How Racially Diverse Schools and Classrooms Can Benefit All Students," *The Century Foundation*, February 9, 2016. <https://tcf.org/content/report/how-racially-diverse-schools-and-classrooms-can-benefit-all-students/>

<sup>6</sup> Jomills Henry Braddock II, "Looking Back: The Effects of Court-Ordered Desegregation," in *From the Courtroom to the Classroom: The Shifting Landscape of School Desegregation*. Edited by Claire E. Smrekar and Ellen B. Goldring (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2009), 10-11.

<sup>7</sup> Kara S. Finnigan and Tricia J. Stewart, "Interdistrict Choice as a Policy Solution." Prepared for *School Choice and School Improvement: Research in State, District, and Community Contexts*, Vanderbilt University, October 25-27, 2009, 3. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED513912.pdf>

## 2) Overview of Desegregation Programs

### Program Types

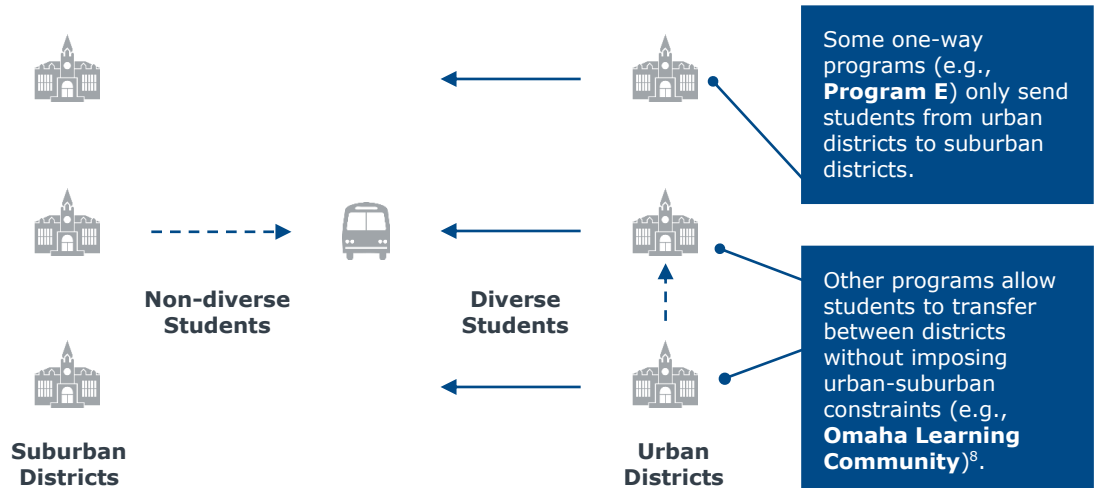
Many interdistrict transfer and magnet school programs provide equity services to member districts as well. For example, **Program E** employs a director of diversity who provides professional development to member districts.

### Profiled Programs Use Two Distinct Program Models to Combat Interdistrict Segregation

Some programs (e.g., **Program E**) use an interdistrict transfer model to integrate regional districts. Other programs (e.g., **Program F**) use interdistrict magnet schools to accomplish the same goal. Notably, some programs (e.g., **Program D/Program D+**) combine both strategies. In all programs, students travel from their home school district to a new school district to increase the diversity of the new district.

In interdistrict transfer programs, students transfer into existing urban or suburban community schools. In interdistrict magnet schools, students join themed, specialized magnet programs that enroll students from multiple districts. Notably, some defunct interdistrict desegregation programs (e.g., **Program C, Program H+**) transitioned to become interdistrict equity services programs, in which districts pool resources to provide equity services to all participating schools. Because these programs aim to counter the effects of segregation but do not contribute to school-wide or district-wide integration, they are not categorized as desegregation programs.

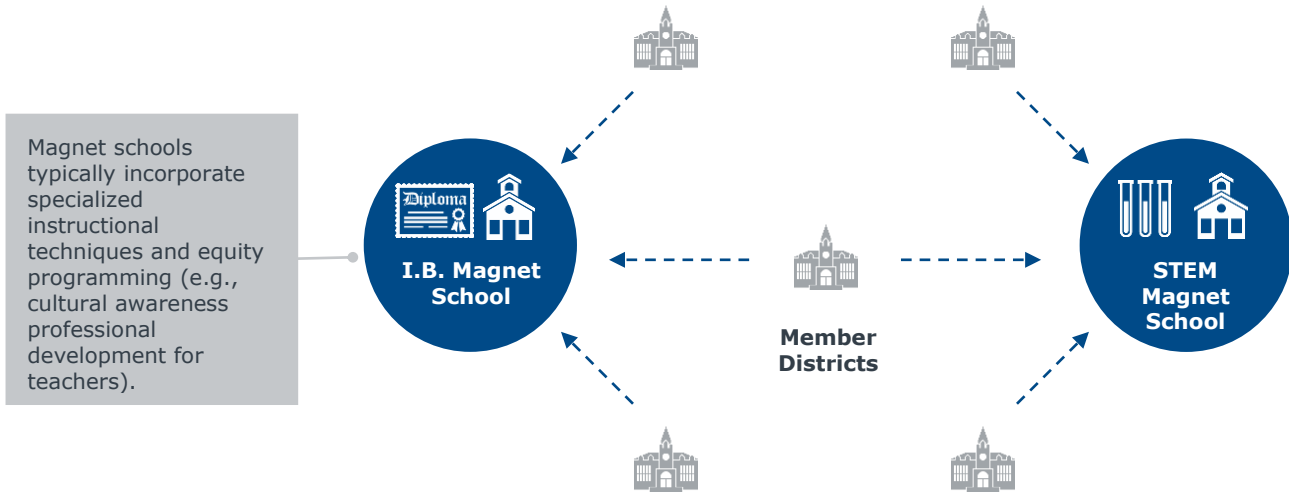
### Interdistrict Transfer Program Structure



*Profiled Programs:* **Program A, Program E, Program D, Omaha Learning Community, Program G, Program B, Program H**

<sup>8</sup> Jennifer Jellison Holme and Kara S. Finnigan, *Striving in Common* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2018), 104.

## Interdistrict Magnet Schools Program Structure at Program F



Profiled Programs: Program D<sup>+</sup>, Program F, Program H<sup>+</sup>, Program C, Omaha Learning Community<sup>9</sup>

## Program Outcomes

### Interdistrict Desegregation Programs Improve the Academic Performance of Participating Students

Research indicates that integrated schools improve the academic performance of all attending students. For example, a 2010 meta-analysis of 59 studies found that students achieve higher mathematics performance in racially and socioeconomically diverse schools across all racial and socioeconomic backgrounds as compared to less diverse schools.<sup>10</sup> Because interdistrict transfer and magnet school programs create more integrated school settings, more students of all races can access integrated classrooms. In addition, numerous studies highlight the benefits of integrated schools to African-American students.<sup>11</sup>

Regarding interdistrict desegregation programs specifically, contacts from **College of Education A** and **Think Tank A** note that on average, interdistrict transfer programs improve the academic performance of program participants. For example, contacts at **Program A** report that urban program participants who attend suburban schools graduate and attend postsecondary education at the same rate as suburban students, which is notable given that suburban schools often outperform urban schools. Further, a 2013 fact sheet from **Program D** reports that students who attend Program D schools demonstrate higher test scores in every subject than students in other city schools.<sup>12</sup> Lastly, an independent report showed that Program E students consistently outperform peer students in city schools.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Jennifer Jellison Holmes and Kara S. Finnigan, *Striving in Common*, 105

<sup>10</sup> Roslyn A. Mickelson and Martha Bottia, "Integrated Education and Mathematics Outcomes: A Synthesis of Social Science Research." 88 N.C. L. Rev. 993 (2010). <http://scholarship.law.unc.edu/nclr/vol88/iss3/7>.

<sup>11</sup> Jomills Henry Braddock II, "Looking Back: The Effects of Court-Ordered Desegregation," in *From the Courtroom to the Classroom: The Shifting Landscape of School Desegregation*. Edited by Claire E. Smrekar and Ellen B. Goldring (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2009), 6-7.

<sup>12</sup> Program D/Program D<sup>+</sup>, "Frequently Asked Questions," provided April 24, 2019, 2.

<sup>13</sup> Anonymized Authors, "Program E Outcomes," *Anonymized Institution*, 2011, 16-21.

## Program E Student Achievement Outcomes 2009/2010<sup>14</sup>

### Math Performance



**47%**

of sixth grade Program E students rated proficient or advanced in math, as compared to 38 percent in the city.

### Reading Performance



**68%**

of sixth grade Program E students rated proficient or advanced in reading, as compared to 44 percent in the city.

### Graduation Rates



**93%**

of Program E students graduated high school on time, as compared to 61 percent in city.

Students who attend interdistrict magnet schools also demonstrate increased academic achievement. In 2013, **Program D+** students outperformed the state in all areas of the state standardized test except for mathematics.<sup>15</sup> Further, contacts at **Program F** note that at their well-integrated, application-based (i.e., all students must apply through the lottery to attend) magnet school, student test scores are extremely high. Lastly, minority students perform well in integrated magnet school settings. African-American students in Program D+ outperformed statewide peers by double-digit percentage points in reading.<sup>16</sup>



### Ensure Program Participants Can Access All District Resources

Contacts from **College of Education A** note that interdistrict desegregation program participants only experience beneficial academic outcomes if schools ensure that students gain equitable access to gifted and talented programs, advanced coursework, and other district resources.

## Interdistrict Desegregation Programs May Improve the Ability of Students to Live and Work in Diverse Settings

Research suggests that because integrated school environments promote greater contact between students of different races, they encourage students to form intergroup friendships that help to reduce prejudice, increase tolerance, and improve interracial friendliness.<sup>17,18</sup>

These effects extend into the long term. Students who attended racially diverse schools are more likely to support desegregation, to interact with diverse peers in college, and to oppose racial discrimination.<sup>19</sup> In addition, African Americans who attended integrated schools are more likely to live in integrated neighborhoods and report close, intergroup friendships later in life.<sup>20</sup> Lastly, students who attend integrated schools are more likely to work in integrated settings, as high-school racial composition strongly predicts coworker racial composition.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Anonymized Authors, "Program E Outcomes," *Anonymized Institution*, 2011, 16-21.

<sup>15</sup> Program D/Program D+, "Frequently Asked Questions," provided April 24, 2019, 2.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Amy Stuart Wells, Lauren Fox, and Diana Cordova-Cobo, "How Racially Diverse Schools and Classrooms Can Benefit All Students," *The Century Foundation*, February 9, 2016. <https://tcf.org/content/report/how-racially-diverse-schools-and-classrooms-can-benefit-all-students/>

<sup>18</sup> Jomills Henry Braddock II, "Looking Back: The Effects of Court-Ordered Desegregation," 10-11.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 12-13.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Jomills Henry Braddock II, "Looking Back: The Effects of Court-Ordered Desegregation," 14-15.



## Social Outcomes of Integrated Educational Environments<sup>22</sup>



Diversity experiences in college are related to **increased civic engagement**.



Access to diverse educational settings for first-year college students **improves student leadership skills** and psychological well-being.



In K-12 education, diverse classrooms promote **greater creativity and problem-solving skills** in both white and minority students.

Because many interdistrict desegregation programs increase the likelihood that students will interact with students from different racial groups, they also increase the likelihood that students will experience short- and long-term benefits related to attending integrated schools.<sup>23</sup>

## Interdistrict Desegregation Programs May Not Meaningfully Reduce Regional Segregation

Because interdistrict desegregation programs often allow only small groups of diverse students to access segregated schools, they frequently do not meaningfully adjust the demographics of receiving districts. Researchers argue that though interdistrict desegregation programs provide access to quality schools for some students, they fail to address larger inequities of school segregation by race and income.<sup>24</sup>

For example, the seven receiving school districts that participate in the **Program G** receive between five and 60 urban students per district, with an average of 24 students per district.<sup>25</sup> Further, contacts from **Program E** report that participating districts only receive between 30 and 400 urban students, which means that often each classroom only hosts one or two Program E students. In addition, because both programs are one-way, urban districts do not receive students and thus do not experience any change in student diversity. In **Program A** and **Program D**, students from the suburbs may attend urban schools, but contacts report that few students take advantage of this opportunity and those who do are often students of color.

## Proportion of Transfer Students at a Participating District in the Program G<sup>26</sup>



**12,287**

students in receiving district



**60**

students transfer from urban district



**0.49%**

of receiving district students are transfers

Some interdistrict desegregation programs do meaningfully adjust the demographics of receiving districts. For example, contacts from **Program F** report that a member district's demographics increased from five percent students of color to 14 percent students of color due to magnet program students. However, contacts report that the program does not adjust the demographics of racially isolated schools in more urban districts (i.e., suburban, white students do not use the program to transfer to urban schools).

<sup>22</sup> Amy Stuart Wells, Lauren Fox, and Diana Cordova-Cobo, "How Racially Diverse Schools and Classrooms Can Benefit All Students," *The Century Foundation*.

<sup>23</sup> Kara S. Finnigan and Tricia J. Stewart, "Interdistrict Choice as a Policy Solution," 3.

<sup>24</sup> Jennifer Jellison Holme and Kara S. Finnigan, *Striving in Common*, 44.

<sup>25</sup> "Program G," Program G Office of Education, accessed May 6, 2019.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*






## Program Challenges

Similarly, full magnet schools (i.e., schools with a student body entirely made up of magnet applicants) at **Program D+** and Program F prove effective to integrate schools. For example, an application-only STEM school at Program F maintains an enrollment of approximately 50 percent students of color. However, these magnet schools do not contribute to the integration of districts as a whole.

### Profiled Closed Desegregation Programs Cease Operations Due to Decreased Political, Community, and/or Legal Support

**Program B**, **Program H**, **Program H+**, and **Program C** no longer operate desegregation efforts. Both Program H+ and Program C became equity services programs. Program H+ closed soon after this transition, but Program C still operates as **Program C#**. Contacts at defunct programs cite multiple reasons for program closure.

#### Challenges that Led to Closure at Profiled Programs

 <p><b>Competing Funding Priorities</b></p>	<p>All profiled programs cite funding priorities as a key motivator for program closure. For example, contacts from <b>Program B</b> note that suburban administrators received preferable funding from open enrollment. Further, contacts from <b>Program H+</b> and <b>Program C</b> note that superintendents withdrew their support for magnet schools because they wanted to retain funding lost to the program.</p>
 <p><b>Decreased Community Engagement</b></p>	<p>Contacts from Program B note that the surrounding community demonstrated declined interest in conversations and initiatives designed to address segregation, as school advocates focused on improving community schools rather than transporting students. Contacts from <b>Program H</b> report that suburban families resisted the program and suggested that program participants caused reduced test scores and classroom disruptions.</p>
 <p><b>Leadership Turnover</b></p>	<p>At Program B, contacts report that the program lost support in part because new board members, superintendents, and regional legislators arrived without any understanding of the program's function, history, and importance. These groups explored open enrollment and voucher programs rather than Program B.</p>
 <p><b>Program Value Concerns</b></p>	<p>At Program H+, contacts report that district leadership and community members felt that because their communities became more diverse, they no longer needed to participate in the program. Contacts also suggest that though the program improved educational outcomes for the 800 students that could attend the magnet schools, it did not support equity throughout the region, which led leadership to question its efficacy.</p>
 <p><b>Legal Challenges</b></p>	<p>Though no profiled program has yet closed due to legal challenges to race-based selection criteria, contacts from <b>Program D+</b> report that plaintiffs represented by the Pacific Legal Foundation sued the program to remove race-based criteria. In addition, contacts from the <b>Program G</b> and <b>Program E</b> anticipate legal challenges to their race-based selection criteria.</p>

### 3) Program Selection Criteria

#### Legal Environment

#### Consider Designing Program Selection Criteria that Do Not Rely on the Race of Individual Students

Currently, **Program E** and the **Program G** select students based on their individual race. In Program E, any urban resident of color can apply to attend suburban schools, while in the Program G, any minority student (i.e., African-American, Asian, Pacific Islander, Filipino, Hispanic/Latino, American-Indian, Alaskan Native)<sup>27</sup> who resides within the city school district can apply to attend participating suburban districts. Both programs use a lottery to select from program applicants.

**EAB cannot provide legal advice.** Any legal interpretations contained within this report are drawn from analyses developed by academic experts.

That said, according to the Supreme Court ruling on Seattle's *PICS* and Louisville's *McFarland* cases (i.e., the *PICS* decision),<sup>28</sup> voluntary desegregation programs should not make determinations about individual students based on said students' race unless absolutely necessary (i.e., if the program can both prove that other options are not satisfactory to create integration and assert that integration is a compelling state interest).<sup>29</sup> For this reason, contacts at Program E anticipate potential legal challenges to their selection criteria.

However, according to Justice Kennedy's controlling opinion, educational institutions may continue to address desegregation through race-neutral or non-individualized, race-conscious practices (e.g., drawing attendance zones in recognition of neighborhood demographics).<sup>30</sup> Thus, interdistrict desegregation programs and other educational institutions may still use generalized racial, socioeconomic, or geographic criteria to select students to integrate districts. Between 2007 and 2016, the number of districts that use student socioeconomic status in assignment procedures more than doubled from 40 to 91.<sup>31</sup>

#### Race-Conscious Criteria

#### Consider Using the Racial Composition of Students' Neighborhoods to Select Students

The Obama Administration released a **Guidance Document** that suggests potential legal avenues to address school integration. Though the Trump Administration rescinded this guidance, **this article** notes that the underlying law has not changed.

According to the *PICS* decision, districts may consider race in a "general way and without treating each student in a different fashion solely on the basis of a systematic, individual typing by race."<sup>32</sup> **Program F** considers race in a way that appears to align with this guidance. Contacts report that the program admits students through a lottery that incorporates a generalized racial criterion. If students apply to an over-subscribed magnet school, administrators implement a lottery preference based on whether the student's neighborhood is racially isolated. Administrators rely on the state definition for racial isolation: legislators define a school district as racially-isolated if its enrollment of minority students exceeds the enrollment of minority students of any adjoining district by more than 20 percentage points," where minority students are "African/Black Americans, Asian/Pacific Americans, Chicano/Latino Americans, and American Indian/Alaskan Native" or multiracial students who have origins in the above categories.<sup>33</sup>

27 "Program G," Program G Office of Education, accessed May 9, 2019.

28 *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1*, 551 U.S. 701, 2007, 2792, cited in Kevin G. Welner and Eleanor R. Spindler, "The Post-*PICS* Picture: Examining School Districts' Policy Options for Mitigating Racial Segregation" in *From the Courtroom to the Classroom: The Shifting Landscape of School Desegregation*. Edited by Claire E. Smrekar and Ellen B. Goldring (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2009), 60.

29 Kevin G. Welner and Eleanor R. Spindler, "The Post-*PICS* Picture: Examining School Districts' Policy Options for Mitigating Racial Segregation" in *From the Courtroom to the Classroom: The Shifting Landscape of School Desegregation*. Edited by Claire E. Smrekar and Ellen B. Goldring (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2009), 57.

30 *Ibid.*

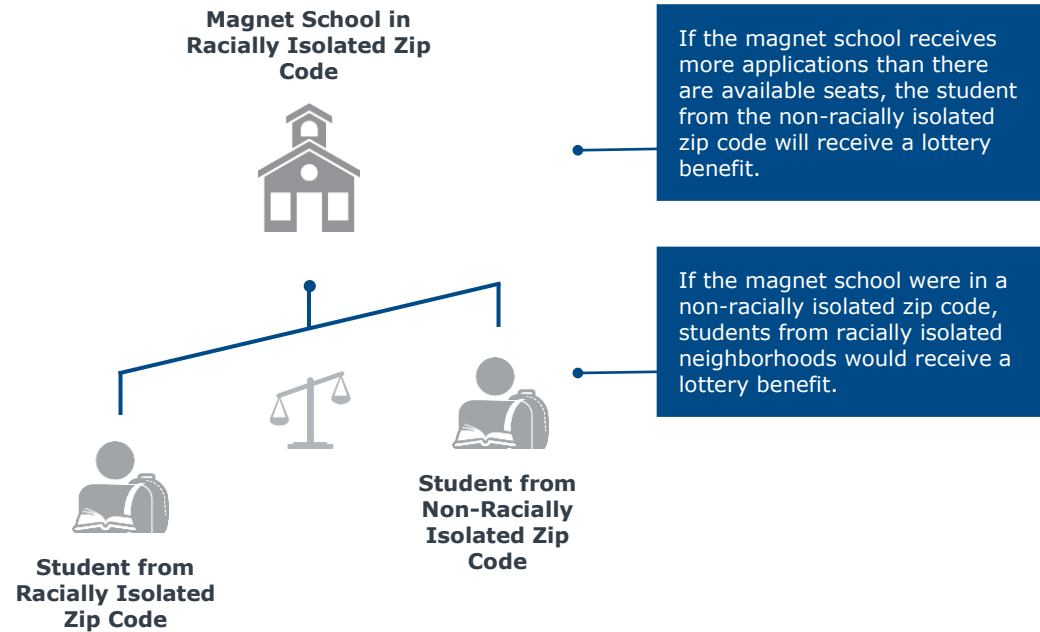
31 Halley Potter, Kimberly Quick, and Elizabeth Davies, "A New Wave of School Integration: Districts and Charters Pursuing Socioeconomic Diversity," *The Century Foundation*, February 9, 2016. <https://tcf.org/content/report/a-new-wave-of-school-integration/>

32 *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1*, 551 U.S. 701, 2007, 2792, cited in Kevin G. Welner and Eleanor R. Spindler, "The Post-*PICS* Picture: Examining School Districts' Policy Options for Mitigating Racial Segregation" in *From the Courtroom to the Classroom: The Shifting Landscape of School Desegregation*. Edited by Claire E. Smrekar and Ellen B. Goldring (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2009), 60.

33 "State Administrative Rules," Program F State Statutes, accessed May 5, 2019.

Contacts note that schools can also be racially isolated as compared to other schools in their district if their school-wide enrollment of protected students exceeds the number of protected students of adjoining schools by more than 20 percentage points. Administrators use maps provided by the state department of education that identify racially isolated areas based on current education data on neighborhood demographics.

### Lottery Preference at *Program F*



Importantly, this lottery preference does not consider the race of individual students. A white student applying from a racially-isolated neighborhood receives the same lottery preference as a minority student applying from the same neighborhood. Contacts at Program F report, however, that the system has helped to create integrated schools—an application-only (i.e., all students must apply through the lottery) magnet school that relies on the above system enrolls approximately 50 percent students of color.<sup>34</sup> In addition, the system helps to integrate participating districts. Contacts report that one suburban district increased in diversity from five to approximately 14 percent students of color.

Similarly, contacts from **Program E** note that their program may adjust its admissions criteria and mission to focus on creating racial balance in a specific school, rather than on criteria based on the racial isolation of neighborhoods. Thus, if a school is predominantly white, the program will prioritize applicants of color who would increase the diversity of the school. However, administrators have not yet finalized the specific characteristics of this plan (i.e., how the program will prioritize applicants of color without using individualized racial criteria).

## Race-Neutral Selection Criteria

### Consider Using Residential Stipulations as Proxy to Promote Integration

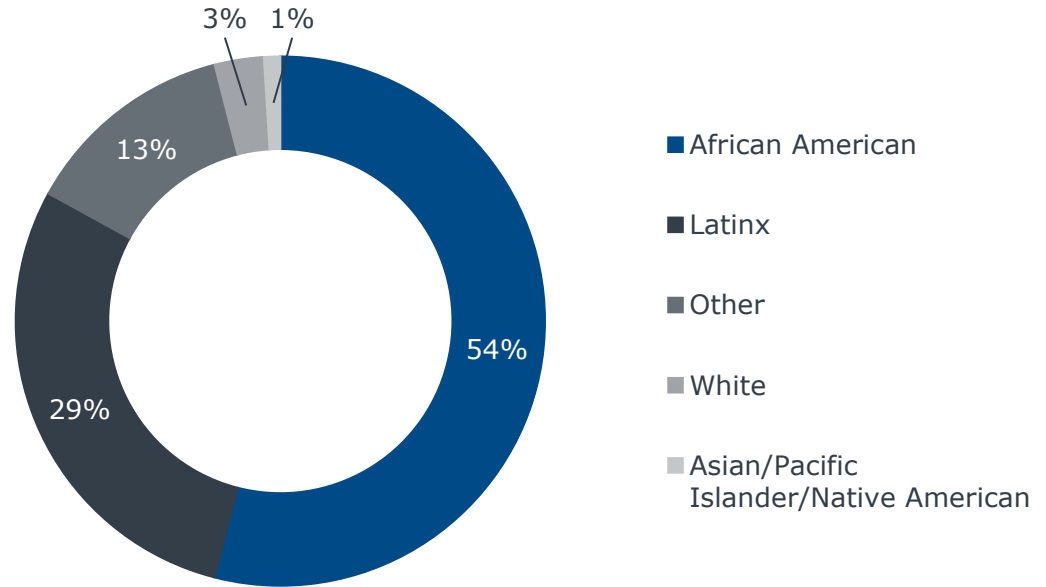
Due to the uncertain legal terrain surrounding race-based selection criteria, many programs turn to race-neutral approaches to integrate participating districts. At **Program A** and **Program D**, any city resident may apply to attend a school in

<sup>34</sup> "Search for Public Schools," National Center for Education Statistics, accessed May 17, 2019. <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/>

suburban districts, and contacts at Program A report that program administrators adjusted the program’s mission to focus on socioeconomic rather than racial integration.

Contacts from Program D note that the surrounding city is predominantly made up of people of color, whereas the suburbs are 81 percent white. Because only residents of the city can apply to attend districts in suburban areas (and vice versa), the program still achieves integration without an explicit racial criterion. Contacts from Program A also report that the program continues to send primarily minority students to suburban districts even without a racial criterion.

### Demographics of Program D Participants Attending Suburban Schools



However, contacts from Program D report that, though their program is two-way, suburban applicants who attend urban schools through the program are primarily minority students. Thus, the Program D does not meaningfully contribute to integration in urban community schools.

Contacts from **Think Tank A** assert that socioeconomic diversity is valuable even beyond its relationship to racial diversity. **This article** suggests that when raising student achievement, socioeconomic strategies can be more effective than race-based strategies.

### Criteria Based on Socioeconomic Status Can Achieve Economic Integration and Potentially Racial Integration, Depending on District Characteristics

Many educational institutions turn to socioeconomic status to integrate school districts. Contacts from **Think Tank A** report that legally speaking, programs must meet a less strict legal standard to use socioeconomic status than they would to use race. In fact, researchers identified 91 districts and charter networks that rely on socioeconomic status as a factor in student assignment.<sup>35</sup>

Think Tank A research notes that socioeconomic and racial segregation are associated with one another and often overlap, and thus socioeconomic integration may also create racial integration.<sup>36</sup> Researchers suggest that in predominantly bi-racial

<sup>35</sup> Halley Potter, Kimberly Quick, and Elizabeth Davies, "A New Wave of School Integration: Districts and Charters Pursuing Socioeconomic Diversity," *The Century Foundation*, February 9, 2016. <https://tcf.org/content/report/a-new-wave-of-school-integration/>  
<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

districts with sizeable overlaps between class and race, socioeconomic status measures can create racial integration.<sup>37</sup>

Contacts at **College of Education A** highlight **Omaha Learning Community** as an effective example of an interdistrict desegregation program that relies on socioeconomic status. The program, as originally designed, allowed students to transfer between schools across all 11 participating districts, but students whose presence would bring a school's socioeconomic balance (i.e., the school's proportion of low-income students) closer to the metro-wide average received priority admission and transportation.<sup>38</sup>

In 2016, however, the program ceased providing free transportation to all students who impact the socioeconomic status of a school. Instead, the program now only provides transportation to students with free and reduced lunch, which reduced the likelihood that higher-income students would transfer into lower income schools.<sup>39</sup>

## To Measure Student Socioeconomic Status, Combine Individualized and Neighborhood-Level Measures

**Program H**, which also used socioeconomic status to select students, relied on a single socioeconomic status measure: families who qualified for free and reduced lunch (FRL) prices could apply to attend suburban schools. Contacts from **Think Tank A** note that though FRL eligibility effectively identifies whether an individual student is at or near poverty, the measure does not allow for a nuanced interpretation of socioeconomic status (i.e., a measure that incorporates multiple factors related to poverty). Also, research notes that families often do not report FRL status for fear of social stigma. These issues make it difficult to rely on FRL eligibility alone to integrate schools.<sup>40</sup>

Thus, contacts from Think Tank A recommend that programs use both individualized, self-reported socioeconomic data and neighborhood-level census information to select students. Contacts note that though census data provides information about neighborhoods rather than individual students, it allows program administrators to select additional criteria and divide participants into multiple groups.

Contacts highlight **Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools** as an example of a district that implemented effective measures of socioeconomic status. This district relies on data provided by parents, census data, and district data to classify students based on socioeconomic status.<sup>41</sup> This approach allows the district to accurately rate students even if parents provide inaccurate or no data.

37 Kevin G. Welner and Eleanor R. Spindler, "The Post-*PICS* Picture: Examining School Districts' Policy Options for Mitigating Racial Segregation," 61.

38 Jennifer Jellison Holme and Kara S. Finnigan, *Striving in Common*, 104-105.

39 *Ibid.*

40 Halley Potter, Kimberly Quick, and Elizabeth Davies, "A New Wave of School Integration: Districts and Charters Pursuing Socioeconomic Diversity."

41 Ann Doss Helms, "Choice, Diversity, and Schools: How the New CMS Magnet Lottery Will Work," *The Charlotte Observer*, November 3, 2016. <https://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/local/education/article112262392.html>

## Sources of Socioeconomic Status Criteria at *Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools*<sup>42</sup>

Criteria	Census/American Community Survey	Family-Reported Data	District Data
Household Income	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Parent Educational Attainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
English Language Ability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Single Parent Household	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Home Ownership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Number of Minors in Household		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Academic Performance Rating of Home School			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

District administrators at Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools use socioeconomic status for census blocks to assign a numeric rating to each of 548 census blocks, which administrators divide into three equal groups: high, medium, and low socioeconomic status. Administrators then calculate a second socioeconomic status label for each student based on family-reported data, so that each student has two ratings. For magnet programs, administrators assign students using these ratings to increase the socioeconomic diversity of the school.<sup>43</sup>

## Combined Selection Criteria

### To Achieve Both Racial and Socioeconomic Status Diversity, Consider Combining Racial and Socioeconomic Selection Criteria

Socioeconomic status alone does not always create effective racial integration. Research suggests that socioeconomic criteria often fail to integrate large, multi-racial, urban districts.<sup>44</sup> Contacts from **College of Education A** thus recommend that program administrators consider the integration effort of **Jefferson County Public Schools**, which incorporates census-block-level data on race, educational attainment, and income to categorize students into three groups based on their neighborhood of residence.

Administrators assign a diversity index to each school based on a weighted average of the number of students from each category who attend. Administrators then assign students to schools within regional clusters or magnet schools to create a diversity index between 1.4 and 2.5 in each school, while also incorporating family preference.<sup>45</sup> Critically, this system does not rely on the race of individual students. Rather, it assigns students based on the demographics of their neighborhood.

<sup>42</sup> Ann Doss Helms, "Choice, Diversity, and Schools: How the New CMS Magnet Lottery Will Work," *The Charlotte Observer*.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Kevin G. Welner and Eleanor R. Spindler, "The Post-*PICS* Picture: Examining School Districts' Policy Options for Mitigating Racial Segregation," 61.

<sup>45</sup> Kim Bridges, "Jefferson County Public Schools: From Legal Enforcement to Ongoing Commitment," *The Century Foundation*, October 14, 2016. <https://tcf.org/content/report/jefferson-county-public-schools/>

**Census Block Categorization Process at Jefferson County Public Schools<sup>46</sup>**

<b>Neighborhood Characteristics</b>	<b>Category One</b>	<b>Category Two</b>	<b>Category Three</b>
<b>Income</b>	Less than \$42,000	\$42,000-\$62,000	More than \$62,000
<b>Percent White</b>	Less than 73%	73% to 88%	More than 88%
<b>Educational Attainment (Six Point Scale)</b>	Up to an associate's degree (Less than 3.5)	College courses beyond an associate's degree (3.5 to 3.7)	College courses up to a bachelor's degree and beyond (More than 3.7)

As a result of this system, 120 out of the 134 schools in Jefferson County Public Schools meets district requirements for diversity indices. In addition, 80 percent of students support school integration plans, and 90 percent of parents agree that diverse schools provide educational benefits for their children. Lastly, the percentage of students who meet college and career readiness standards increased from 32 percent to 63 percent in the four years after student assignment policy changes.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Kim Bridges, "Jefferson County Public Schools: From Legal Enforcement to Ongoing Commitment," *The Century Foundation*.  
<sup>47</sup> Ibid.



# 4) Political and Community Engagement

## Political Engagement

### Ask Program Leadership to Present at Community and District Leadership Meetings About Program Benefits

At **Program A** and **Program E**, program administrators attend district board meetings, school leadership meetings, superintendent meetings, principal groups, and parent meetings to present on the history and benefits of interdistrict desegregation programs. The lead administrator of Program E attended meetings in every participating district during a listening tour in 2018.

Contacts at Program E emphasize the importance of informing district leadership of the rich history of desegregation programs. Program leadership frame the program around the civil rights movement and encourage district stakeholders to continue the legacy of the movement. Contacts also suggest that program leadership design presentations to highlight resources that interdistrict desegregation programs provide for all participating districts, including equity services, dedicated support staff, and fundraising support opportunities.

### Sample Suburban District Leadership Presentation Agenda

#### *A History of Equity*

##### **Presenter**

The program director is currently conducting a listening tour of all districts that participate in the city's interdistrict integration efforts.

##### **Agenda**

**A Brief History:** The director will explore the programs' origins in the aftermath of the civil rights movement, clarify the program's purpose, and explain the program's structure.

**Integration Benefits All:** The director will summarize research that highlights the numerous academic and social benefits that all students—including program participants and students at receiving districts—experience from attending integrated schools.

**Program Infrastructure:** The director will explain the numerous resources that the program provides participating suburban districts, including additional funding, staff professional development led by the program's full-time director of diversity, and equity grants secured by program staff.

**Blazing a Path Forward:** The director will highlight future initiatives related to community engagement and student support and suggest volunteer opportunities for interested parents.

**Frequently Asked Questions:** The director will address frequently asked questions related to program funding and outcomes and take questions.

To ensure that program advocates provide consistent messaging at advocacy events, administrators at **Program E** developed advocate one-pagers that contain common talking points. Administrators also highlight benefits of integration on Program E's webpage.

Presenters should encourage district program advocates, including family members and administrators, to address audience questions related to program funding, overcrowding, and other common concerns.

Presenters should emphasize that programs do not drain district resources and in fact provide numerous important services.



## Schedule Meetings and Presentations with Local Political Representatives

The lead administrator of **Program E** scheduled private meetings with all state legislators and the city’s mayor to clarify common misconceptions about the program. Next, the lead administrator plans to meet with city counselors to ensure that they do not oppose the program.

## Use Up-to-Date Data on Program Funding, Outcomes, and Services to Address Common Political Concerns

Contacts at **Program A**, **Program C#**, and **Program E** note that many political leaders and community members oppose the programs due to misunderstandings about program mission, funding structures, and services. Contacts at these programs suggest that program leadership use facts and data on student enrollment, funding structures, student and family contributions, and academic outcomes to quickly address political pushback based on incorrect information.

## Tactics to Address Common Political Objections to Desegregation Programs

	<b>Political Pushback</b>		<b>Program Administrator Response</b>
<b>Funding</b>	Suburban administrators assert that their district assumes the costs of <b>Program E</b> participants and thus loses funding.	→	Administrators clarify that state funds almost entirely cover Program E and highlight, line-by-line, how much funding the district receives for transport, grant-funding, and per-pupil support.
<b>Overcrowding</b>	Suburban administrators assert that Program E students exacerbate the issues district schools face with overcrowding.	→	Administrators use enrollment data to highlight that the school in question is overcrowded by 300-400 students but hosts only 15 Program E students.
<b>Competitive Enrollment</b>	Suburban administrators communicate parent concerns that <b>Program A</b> students will take their child’s place on sports teams and in extra-curricular activities.	→	Administrators use program selection criteria to explain that the program does not consider academic or artistic performance when selecting students.
<b>Urban Funding Decreases</b>	Urban administrators suggest that Program E takes money from schools in need and redistributes it to wealthy suburban schools.	→	Administrators highlight that Program E is mostly state-funded and that although districts lose a small per-pupil allocation, they save money because they no longer spend funds on the departing
<b>Lack of Perceived Need</b>	District administrators suggest that their district already has an adequate number of minority students and effective supports for those students, and thus does not need <b>Program C#</b> ’s services.	→	Administrators ask the district to use public-available equity data to assess achievement gaps in their schools, which highlights that the district has not yet solved equity issues.



### Develop Frequently Asked Question Sheets to Distribute to Legislators and District Leaders

Administrators at **Program D/Program D+** developed a frequently asked questions sheet that responds to common pushback. For example, the sheet clearly explains the funding calculation to demonstrate that city community schools save money when a student leaves to attend Program D+.

## Frame Program Mission and Value Statements to Emphasize Integration Rather than Access to Quality Schools

Contacts from **Program E** and **Program B** suggest that when program messaging focuses on providing students with access to quality schools rather than on the benefits of integration, suburban and urban leadership are less likely to support the program. If program messaging focuses on school quality rather than integration, leadership could reason that rather than bus students, they should invest more resources into struggling schools. Contacts assert that if program leaders had presented Program B as a way to create integrated schools for all students, they could have gained additional support for the program.

Contacts from Program E report that in all public appearances, whether meetings, television interviews, or speeches, program leadership emphasize how the program’s purpose is to create integration. Program leaders avoid any mention about the quality of city schools and instead highlight how the program creates intergroup friendships and prepares students to live and work in diverse settings.

## Strategies to Communicate A Mission of Integration to Community Stakeholders



**Partner with research institutes** to develop reports and one-pagers on program outcomes and on the benefits of integration.



**Dedicate a section of the program webpage** to research on the benefits of racial and socioeconomic integration.



**Send press releases** on program mission and policy changes to local churches, radio stations, news channels, and local media sources.

## Community Engagement

### Create Community Support Groups to Engage Families in Fundraising and Advocacy Efforts

Administrators at **Program E** coordinate two community support groups in participating suburban districts. Members of the first support group lead fundraisers (e.g., marathons, community dinners) to provide late buses and scholarships to Program E students who attend schools in suburban districts. Members of the second group host Program E participants at their homes throughout the week so that those students can participate in after-school activities at each suburban district.

Contacts report that these support groups help families better understand the program, recognize the benefits of integration, and create passionate community advocates. Members of both programs visit school committee meetings, write to legislators, and attend advocacy days at state government buildings to ensure the program remains sustainable.

Similarly, at **Program D/Program D<sup>+</sup>**, community members—including parents, students, and educators—across the region unified to form a support group that advocates for integrated schools. Members work to raise awareness of and promote the improvement of school integration programs and participate in outreach, advocacy, and community-building activities.<sup>48</sup> Community members conduct presentations at school and community group meetings, coordinate an advocacy day at the capitol, host monthly public meetings, and lead programs in the region’s schools.<sup>49</sup>

## Provide After School Programming to Support Urban and Suburban Families, Including Program Participants

At **Program E**, program administrators operate two community engagement programs open to both urban program participants and suburban families: an educational program and a cultural event program. Because Program E hosts these programs in the city, contacts report that these events facilitate two-way social integration. To encourage suburban families to attend, program leaders target programming to appeal to both suburban and urban interests.

### Sample Community Engagement Programming at *Program E*



#### Educational Program

**Program E** staff offer courses on how parents of program participants can support their students. Through these programs, parents can learn to support their children without traveling to suburban districts.

- Courses discuss topics ranging from the college application process to relationship issues in adolescence.
- To encourage suburban families to participate, Program E’s director of diversity teaches courses on how to discuss race with children and respond to common biases.



#### Cultural Event Program

Program E staff partner with local theaters to host monthly presentations, plays, and events for urban and suburban families.

- Productions focus on history and equity.
- Program staff invite suburban families, school leadership, and members of local racial justice groups to attend alongside program participants.

Contacts report that Program E plans to launch additional community engagement programming, including a mentorship program that pairs program alumni with current students and a grant-funded bus tour program. In the latter program, Program participants will design and lead civil rights tours of the city’s downtown for suburban students to help communicate the historical importance of the program.

<sup>48</sup> “Our Mission,” Program D/Program D<sup>+</sup> Support Group, accessed May 7, 2019.  
<sup>49</sup> “Our Work,” Program D/Program D<sup>+</sup> Support Group, accessed May 7, 2019.

## Solicit Community Feedback on Integration Efforts Through Surveys and Structured Public Forums

Contacts from **College of Education A** note that program administrators must engage the community to build an effective, lasting integration program. Contacts highlight **Jefferson County Public Schools** as an example of a school district that created effective, lasting community support for school integration. Contacts report that the district coordinates both public forums and surveys that specifically measure community perceptions. For example, after launching separate parent and student surveys, Jefferson County Public Schools partnered with the [Civil Rights Project](#) to assess how each group experiences the district's student assignment plan.<sup>50</sup>

Contacts from **Think Tank A** report that **District 15** (in New York City) hosted an effective, structured series of community engagement events prior to designing a new school integration plan. District administrators asked community members to define a diverse school and highlight inefficiencies in the current student assignment plan through multiple public meetings. Administrators then built a proposal from district feedback that garnered strong community support. Importantly, district administrators clearly documented the plan development process on a [dedicated website](#), which includes materials from each of the community engagement events.

### Community Engagement Process at *District 15*<sup>51</sup>

- 1** District administrators created a project working group responsible for designing the plan development process, including how to incorporate community feedback.
- 2** District administrators held three public workshops, each with a distinct purpose.
  - Workshop 1: Introduce the planning process and solicit feedback on the current assignment plan.
  - Workshop 2: Explore the historical context of segregation, examine changes in the district's population, and collect plan ideas from participants.
  - Workshop 3: Allow participants to provide feedback on initial plan recommendations.
- 3** The working group presented a set of draft recommendations in a community presentation. The group then released a final plan for review by the New York City Department of Education.

<sup>50</sup> Gary Orfield and Erica Frankenberg, "Experiencing Integration in Louisville: How Parents and Students See the Gains and Challenges," *The Civil Rights Project*, January 2011. [https://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/experiencing-integration-in-louisville-how-parents-and-students-see-the-gains-and-challenges/LOUISVILLE\\_finalV3\\_12711.pdf](https://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/experiencing-integration-in-louisville-how-parents-and-students-see-the-gains-and-challenges/LOUISVILLE_finalV3_12711.pdf)  
<sup>51</sup> "D15 Diversity Plan," District 15, accessed May 7, 2019, <http://d15diversityplan.com/>

## 5) Program Funding

### Funding Strategies

#### To Increase Urban District Engagement, Use State Funds to Replace Per-Pupil Funds Transferred from Urban to Suburban Districts

Contacts from **Program E** report that urban district administrators often oppose the interdistrict desegregation program because they believe they lose extensive funding when students transfer to suburban districts. To respond to this issue, contacts at **College of Education A** and **Think Tank A** suggest that state legislators create policy to replace funds that follow participating students from urban districts to suburban districts. Through funding, legislators can prevent both urban resistance and decreases in the quality of education at urban districts. Research on desegregation programs also supports this funding system.<sup>52</sup> Contacts at Think Tank A report that this approach can increase buy-in from district leaders, but contacts from College of Education A caution that program leaders must advocate with state legislators to ensure that payments continue.

Program administrators at **Program D+** structure the program's funding to mitigate district losses. When a student leaves the district to attend a magnet school, the district continues to receive the same Educational Cost Sharing grant and can continue to collect tax dollars from the town for the student, even though they no longer pay to educate the child. Thus, though the district does pay a low tuition to the magnet school, the funding the district retains exceeds this tuition. Also, as the district no longer needs to pay to educate the departing student, they can spend additional funds on other students.<sup>53</sup>

#### Provide Funding to Incent Districts to Accept Transfer Students

Research suggests that to encourage both urban and suburban districts to take on additional students, programs must provide districts with attractive incentives.<sup>54</sup> At **Program A**, **Program D**, and **Program E**, programs provide additional funding to incent receiving districts to accept students. Contacts from Program A report that receiving districts benefit financially from hosting program students, as suburban districts receive the higher per-pupil funding the state typically provides to urban schools.

At Program D, all participating districts receive incentive funding grants based on the number of students they enroll in Program D schools. For example, districts receive a variable attendance grant from the state based on the percentage of Program D students enrolled.

The Learning Policy Institute report **Sharing the Wealth: How Regional Finance and Desegregation Plans Can Enhance Educational Equity** profiles funding structures at interdistrict desegregation programs.

<sup>52</sup> Kara S. Finnigan and Jennifer Jellison Holme, "Research Brief: Regional Educational Equity Policies: Learning from Inter-district Integration Programs," *The National Coalition on School Diversity*, September 2015, 6, <https://school-diversity.org/pdf/DiversityResearchBriefNo9.pdf>

<sup>53</sup> Program D/Program D+, Frequently Asked Questions," 3-4.

<sup>54</sup> Kara S. Finnigan and Jennifer Jellison Holme, "Research Brief: Regional Educational Equity Policies: Learning from Inter-district Integration Programs," 5.

## Variable Attendance Grant Structure at *Program D*<sup>55</sup>

- 1 \$3,000 per pupil for districts that enroll less than two percent Program D students.
- 2 \$4,000 per pupil for districts that enroll greater than or equal to two percent Program D students.
- 3 \$6,000 per pupil for districts that enroll greater than or equal to three percent Program D students
- 4 \$6,000 per pupil for districts with enrollment greater than 4,000 students that increase the number of Program D students enrolled in the district by at least 50 percent from the district's Program D student enrollment in the prior fiscal year.
- 5 \$8,000 per pupil for districts that enroll greater than or equal to 4 percent Program D students.

### Use Funding to Incent Other Desired District Behaviors

**Program D/Program D<sup>+</sup>** also uses funding to incent districts to enroll younger students and to provide academic and social supports to Program D students. Districts receive an additional \$4,500 for each kindergartner and pre-kindergartner enrolled in a full-day program and receive between \$875 and \$1,200 per pupil to provide academic and social supports/reduce student attrition.<sup>56</sup> When districts accept younger students, these students gain longer, sustained access to integrated suburban schools and high-quality education.

## Consider Hiring a Director of Fundraising to Support Additional Program Services

Most profiled interdistrict desegregation programs fund efforts through a combination of state-provided transportation and grant funding and redirected local education funds. **Program E** is the only program that uses fundraising to support program efforts. Program administrators hired a director of fundraising to coordinate grant applications for additional professional development resources and diversity events. For example, the director of fundraising is currently pursuing grants to hire social workers of color for receiving districts.

The director of fundraising designs campaigns to support additional services and program resources, including college scholarships, summer school, and after-school services for Program E participants. The director also raises funds for other program needs, including supplemental cultural proficiency trainings for districts and a dedicated building for Program E staff.

<sup>55</sup> Program D/Program D<sup>+</sup>, "Program D Funding 2019-2020," provided April 24, 2019.  
<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

## The Federal Magnet Schools Assistance Program Provides Funds to Support Interdistrict Desegregation Programs

Contacts at the **Program F** report that the district received three Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP) grants to develop and support interdistrict magnet schools. Contacts at the **United States Department of Education** note that while other grants may also award funds to interdistrict desegregation programs, the MSAP grant specifically encourages interdistrict choice programs to apply, especially if those programs rely on socioeconomic status to select students. Contacts anticipate a new MSAP competition in 2020.



### **MSAP Encourages Interdistrict Desegregation Programs to Apply<sup>57</sup>**

“We encourage applicants to propose a range of activities that incorporate a focus on socioeconomic diversity, including establishing and participating in a voluntary, interdistrict transfer program for students from varied neighborhoods.”

57 U.S. Department of Education, “Applications for New Awards: Magnet Schools Assistance Program,” *Federal Register*, vol. 81, no. 239 (2016). <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2016-12-13/pdf/2016-29907.pdf>



## 6) Investment in Urban Districts

### Place-Based Investments

#### Ask Participating Districts to Contribute Funding to Educational Infrastructure in High-Poverty Areas

Research suggests that viable interdistrict desegregation programs must incorporate strategies to promote metropolitan equity.<sup>58</sup> In other words, all districts—both urban and suburban—should benefit from regional desegregation efforts. **Omaha Learning Community** incorporates policy specifically designed to funnel educational investments into high-poverty areas of the region. The program levies a small regional tax across all 11 participating districts to fund the development of elementary learning centers, which provide after-school social and academic services to children and parents, including English classes.

Initially, program policy required that the program build elementary learning centers in the highest-poverty neighborhoods in the region, so the program built the first two centers within the boundaries of the urban district.<sup>59</sup> Thus, learning center legislation incentivized place-based investment in urban districts. In 2013/2014, learning centers served over 10,000 students and positively impacted child and family outcomes.<sup>60</sup>

#### Services Provided by Omaha Learning Community Elementary Learning Centers<sup>61</sup>



**Intensive Early Childhood Education**



**English for Parents**



**Childcare Director Training**



**Educational Navigators**



**Parent University**



**Parent Workshops**



**Future Teacher Training**



**Parent-Child Activities**

#### Build Magnet and Themed Community Schools in Urban Districts to Improve Instruction and Facilitate Integration

Contacts from **Think Tank A** note that for interdistrict desegregation programs to be successful, they must be two-way: students must move from urban to suburban schools and from suburban to urban schools. Contacts suggest that programs develop innovative, specialized community schools, magnet programs, and magnet schools in urban districts to attract suburban students. In both **Program D/Program D+** and **Program F**, program administrators created themed schools in urban districts and/or inner-ring suburban districts to facilitate two-way integration.

In **Program D/Program D+**, the state funded the creation of themed interdistrict magnet schools (i.e., Program D+) that accept 50 percent students from the city and 50 percent students from suburban districts. The program located these schools in

<sup>58</sup> Kara S. Finnigan and Jennifer Jellison Holme, "Research Brief: Regional Educational Equity Policies: Learning from Inter-District Integration Programs," 4-5.

<sup>59</sup> Jennifer Jellison Holme and Kara S. Finnigan, *Striving in Common*, 101.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>61</sup> "Programs," Learning Community Douglas Sarpy, accessed May 8, 2019, <https://learningcommunityds.org/programs/>

both suburban and urban districts, and they have proven popular. In addition, the program created themed Program D schools in urban districts separate from the magnet program.<sup>62</sup> These function as urban community schools and support urban students while also attracting suburban ones.

### Application Numbers for *Program D/Program D+*



18,732

suburban families apply to **Program D+**.



1,076

suburban families apply to themed **Program D Schools** in urban districts.

Importantly, urban schools must benefit from the placement of magnet schools and programs. **Omaha Learning Community** provided capital funds and per-pupil funding incentives to help districts build interdistrict magnets/magnet programs known as focus schools. Notably, the city school district contains all three approved focus programs, which gives urban schools access to new, improved facilities and instructional resources.<sup>63</sup> At Program F, each participating district owns and operates magnet programs within its borders, and thus gains access to high caliber instructional strategies and professional development. District leaders replicate these strategies in other, non-magnet community schools in the district.

## Effective Magnet Schools

### To Ensure that Magnet Schools Attract Suburban Students, Design Magnet Schools to Appeal to Suburban Interests

Contacts from **College of Education A** note that magnet schools can attract suburban students to urban districts but often fail to create meaningful integration. To attract suburban students effectively, program administrators should consider the following characteristics of magnet schools.

#### Strategies to Attract Suburban Families to Urban Magnet Schools

##### Incorporate School-Specific, High-Touch Community Partnerships



Contacts from **Think Tank A** note that suburban parents respond positively to magnet schools with an intensive, public partnership with a prestigious urban institution (e.g., universities, museums, medical centers). Contacts emphasize that partnerships must demonstrate tangible impacts. If a school partners with a university, students should volunteer on campus and professors should assist with curriculum development.



##### Market Magnet Schools to Suburban Families

In **Program D/Program D+**, program administrators target extensive marketing campaigns to affluent districts to attract suburban parents.

<sup>62</sup> Program D/Program D+, "Program D Brochure," accessed May 7, 2019.  
<sup>63</sup> Jennifer Jellison Holme and Kara S. Finnigan, *Striving in Common*, 105.



### Establish Magnet Schools Close to Suburban Parent Workplaces

Contacts from **College of Education A** note that program administrators often locate magnet schools in low-income or formerly abandoned schools in high-poverty neighborhoods, which discourage applications from suburban families. Contacts suggest that program administrators instead locate magnet schools in industry parks and near common workplaces so that suburban families feel comfortable.



### Select Appealing Magnet School Themes

Contacts from Think Tank A and College of Education A note that magnet schools should select themes that align with suburban interests. Contacts from College of Education A cite research that suggests that suburban parents react favorably to magnet schools with a Montessori focus, highly selective/academically competitive curricula (e.g., International Baccalaureate), or a technical focus (e.g., P-Tech).

### Survey Suburban Families, Urban Families, and District Leaders to Identify Viable Themes

Program administrators at **Program F** required districts to survey communities about desirable magnet school themes. Districts asked parents what would motivate them to send their child to a school in another district. After analyzing the results, the program settled on the following three themes:<sup>65</sup>

- Visual, Performing, Literary, and Media Arts.
- International Baccalaureate.
- Science, Technology, Engineering, (Arts), and Mathematics (i.e., STEM/STEAM).

## Incorporate Specialized Pedagogical Techniques and Professional Development into Magnet Schools to Improve the Performance of All Students

At **Program F**, program administrators visit all magnet schools to conduct reflection and reviews. Administrators ensure that schools provide cultural competency training to teachers, implement culturally-responsive instructional models (e.g., collaborative learning, project-based learning, inquiry-based learning, differentiated instruction), and engage families. Administrators rely on standardized rubrics to complete reflection and reviews.

Contacts note that administrators source culturally-responsive instructional models from research provided by [Magnet Schools of America](#). Administrators select models backed by evidence and proven to work in schools. Contacts also note that MSAP requires that districts implement culturally responsive instructional models.

To ensure that all teachers feel comfortable implementing instructional models, administrators at Program F ask all magnet schools to implement professional learning communities (PLCs) in some form, in which teams of teachers meet to assess student learning, design shared assessments, and discuss effective instructional practices. Contacts note that teachers also use technology to reflect on instructional practices, including collaborative features from Google Docs and learning management systems.

To learn more about PLCs, consult the book [Learning by Doing: A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work](#), the website [AllThingsPLC](#), and the EAB report [Professional Learning Communities](#).

<sup>65</sup> "Magnet Schools," Program F, accessed May 8, 2019.

## 7) Sunsetting Desegregation Programs

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### Student and Family Support

#### Allow Program Participants to Remain in Participating Districts Until Graduation

When program administrators closed interdistrict desegregation programs at **Program B**, **Program C**, and **Program H<sup>+</sup>**, legislators allowed participants to remain at their current school/within the district until they graduated from high school. Contacts from **Program B** note that participants will remain in former Program B districts until when the last program participant graduates. Through this approach, students can remain at the same school and maintain relationships with friends, teachers, and coaches.

At Program B, superintendents associated with the program sent out district-wide communications to participants to reassure parents that the district remained committed to their children. Superintendents also asked principals, teachers, and counselors to clarify in meetings with students and their families that students could remain in the district until graduation with continued access to transportation, support services, and all prior perks associated with the program. District leadership emphasized that though the program would not accept new students, all other program characteristics would remain the same.

### Replacing Interdistrict Desegregation Programs

#### At Profiled Defunct Programs, No Alternative Integration Programs Emerged

Contacts from **Program B**, **Program C**, and **Program H<sup>+</sup>** report that no programs currently allow students to move to other schools or districts for integration purposes in the area. Contacts from **Program B** note that though some superintendents may argue that open enrollment contributes to integration, contacts cite data showing that open enrollment serves primarily white students from the city, whereas Program B served primarily students of color. Thus, though students can transfer to schools in other districts through open enrollment, open enrollment does not integrate schools in the way that Program B did.

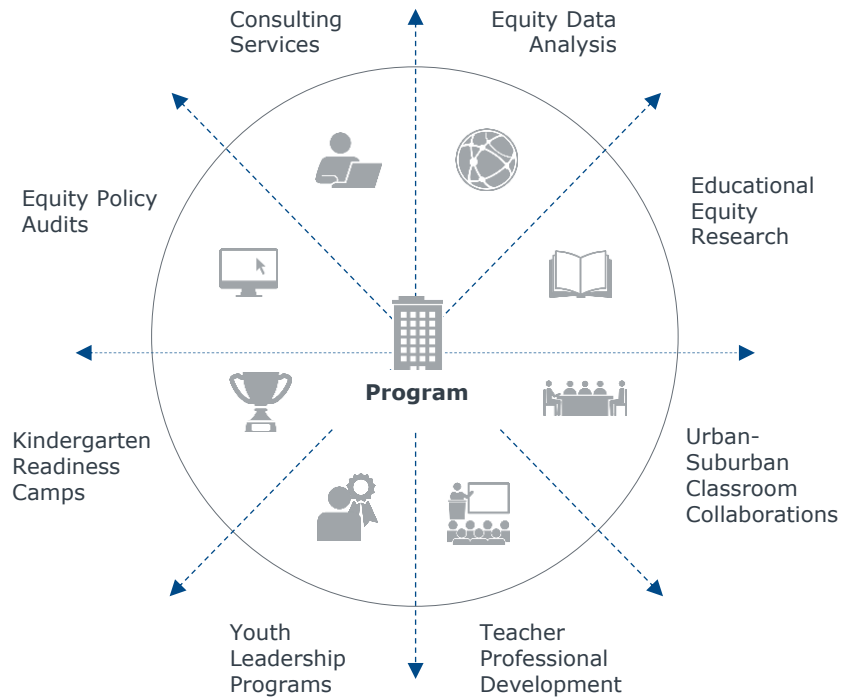
#### Consider Transitioning to an Equity Services Program Model to Reduce Achievement Gaps in Member Districts

Both **Program C** and **Program H<sup>+</sup>** transitioned to programs that, rather than transport students, provide shared equity services to all students. Though Program H<sup>+</sup> closed permanently soon after its transition due to lack of superintendent support, Program C continues to provide equity services as **Program C<sup>#</sup>**.

Program C<sup>#</sup> charges member districts a membership fee, which the program then uses to provide equity services to all member districts. Districts use integration and achievement funding provided by the state to pay the membership fee. Non-member districts purchase individual services at varying price points. Program H<sup>+</sup> also charged member districts a membership fee but developed a tiered service model in which member districts could receive varying levels of services based on three payment tiers.

Currently, Program C<sup>#</sup> serves fewer than 10 suburban member districts, but provides services to more than 40 districts/non-profit organizations across the state, including urban districts. These services include the following:

## Services Provided by *Program C#* and *Program H+*



These programs aim to counter the effects of segregation, but do not contribute to school-wide or district-wide integration. Rather, equity services programs aim to encourage districts to reduce the achievement gap between white and minority students through equity services, including teacher cultural development. However, Program C# does provide some opportunities for students of different racial and socioeconomic backgrounds to interact with one another.

## Integration Programs at *Program C#*



### Urban-Suburban Classroom Partnerships

Program staff facilitate partnerships between grade-level classrooms in urban and suburban districts. First, teachers from both classrooms receive professional development on cultural proficiency. Then, classrooms complete three joint field trips to museums and historical sites, where each student partners with a student from the other district. During these trips, all students complete collaborative lessons tied to racial and cultural understanding. Students also connect with their partners via technology in between classroom meetings.



### Youth Executive Board

All member districts select a limited number of high-school students to participate in three-hour Wednesday board meetings. Students complete intense team-building and leadership activities, learn self-and legislative-advocacy skills, and hold discussions about race, intercultural development, and communication. Two program staff and an executive board alumnus lead board meetings, with support from program youth facilitators.



### Summer Academies

The program coordinates two summer academies. First, the program partners with the a nearby university to offer a summer academy for middle school students. Second, the program pays district teachers to lead a kindergarten readiness camp for younger students.



## Equity Services Programs Encourage Districts to Implement Programs that Improve Student Achievement

Though research is limited on the effectiveness of equity services programs, contacts from **Program C\*** report that they helped member districts reduce achievement and registration gaps within schools through a partnership with [Equal Opportunity Schools](#).

## 8) Research Methodology

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### Project Challenge

Leadership at a member district approached the Forum with the following questions:

- How do contact interdistrict desegregation programs select and place students?
- What are the educational outcomes of students that participate in contact interdistrict desegregation programs?
- To what extent do contact interdistrict desegregation programs increase the diversity of districts that participate in the program?
- How do contact interdistrict desegregation programs fund themselves? What federal funding, if any, is available for interdistrict desegregation programs?
- How do contact interdistrict desegregation programs foster local community support for school desegregation?
- How do contact interdistrict desegregation programs respond to local political challenges?
- How do contact interdistrict desegregation programs respond to litigation related to desegregation?
- What specialized educational models do contact interdistrict desegregation programs operate?
- How do contact interdistrict desegregation programs support participating urban districts?
- For defunct programs:
  - For what reasons did contact interdistrict desegregation programs cease operation?
  - How did contact interdistrict desegregation programs support students and families during the sunseting process?
  - What other programs to desegregate districts, if any, replaced contact interdistrict desegregation programs?

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The Forum interviewed administrative leadership staff at active and defunct interdistrict desegregation programs. The Forum also interviewed academic experts who specialize in interdistrict desegregation efforts and profiled interdistrict and intradistrict desegregation efforts through secondary research. Lastly, the Forum briefly interviewed grant staff from the United States Department of Education.

### A Guide to Programs/Districts Profiled in this Report

Program/District	Approximate Number of Member Districts
Program A	20
Program B	None (Defunct)
Program C/Program C <sup>#</sup>	5
Program D/Program D <sup>+</sup>	30
Program E	30
Program F	10
Program G	10
Program H/Program H <sup>+</sup>	None (Defunct)
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools*	1 (Intradistrict)
District 15*	1 (Intradistrict)
Jefferson County Public Schools*	1 (Intradistrict)
Omaha Learning Community*	10

<sup>#</sup>This program transitioned to become an equity services program. The # indicates the equity services program.

<sup>+</sup>This program possesses both an intradistrict transfer program and interdistrict magnet schools. The + indicates the interdistrict magnet schools component of the program.

\*Profiled through secondary research.

### A Guide to Experts Consulted for this Report

Organization	Description
Think Tank A	This nonpartisan think tank investigates numerous issues, including school desegregation.
College of Education A	Researchers at this college specialize in multiple facets of education research, including school desegregation.
United States Department of Education	United States Department of Education staff manage federal grants that support desegregation efforts, including the Magnet Schools Assistance Program.