Insights
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Breaking Down Barriers: Housing, Neighborhoods, and Schools of Opportunity

Today, past policy choices and an array of systemic forces—including persistent housing discrimination—have segregated many children in distressed, underresourced neighborhoods and high-poverty, low-quality schools. High-poverty schools face many barriers to success. Moreover, the effects of housing and neighborhoods on children are intertwined, offering multiple, potentially complementary ways to support children's development. Although school choice can help students in high-poverty neighborhoods access higher-quality schools, where children live significantly affects their school options: housing strategies are an important complement to choice. Housing policy can enable more children to benefit from neighborhoods and schools of opportunity both by investing where children already are and by enabling families to make opportunity moves.

Place-based housing interventions where children currently live and attend school can support low-income students' education and align with initiatives to improve high-poverty districts and schools. Public housing agencies (PHAs) are well-placed to support children's success in school in many ways, such as helping parents engage in their children's education. Also, integrative housing and education initiatives, such as magnet schools in revitalizing areas and housing mobility programs, can reinforce the integrative student assignment plans many districts have implemented.[1] Diverse schools can help children develop cross-racial trust and greater capacity to navigate cultural differences,[2] and evidence suggests that all groups of children who attend integrated schools experience significant educational benefits.[3]

This report reviews recent research and identifies key steps policymakers can take to improve children's access to high-quality neighborhoods *and* schools. Although housing and school policies are closely related, their design often does not reflect that relationship. In particular, this report suggests housing strategies that could help the nearly 4 million children[4] who already receive federal housing assistance.

- **Coordinate school, housing, and transportation planning, including place-based programs.** Sustainable, institutionalized processes could align related policies at all levels of government, providing a platform for coordinated strategies to support students attending low-quality, high-poverty schools.
- **Build place-based housing-education partnerships.** These partnerships can support low-income students and school improvement strategies. Also, school strategies such as magnet schools can complement place-based programs, enabling children in revitalizing areas to attend high-quality, integrated schools.
- **Encourage affordable housing development near high-quality schools.** The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Program, for instance, could provide a bonus for development located near high-performing schools, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) Section 8 Management Assessment Program could encourage PHAs to increase voucher use near high-quality schools.
- **Support mobility at the regional level.** Children often must move outside their current school district or PHA's jurisdiction to attend higher-performing, lower-poverty schools *and* live in a lower-poverty neighborhood. Regional strategies can better match low-income families and opportunity areas. Promising regional strategies include regionally administered vouchers, regional project-based voucher pools, and regional waiting lists. The federal government could help with technical assistance, evaluation, waivers, and financial support.
- **Consider schools when designating opportunity areas for housing voucher mobility programs, and be flexible when defining those areas.** Only a subset of low-poverty neighborhoods provide access to low-poverty or high-performing schools; low-poverty neighborhoods do not guarantee access to high-quality schools. Communities could aim for high-performing elementary schools, such as those identified by local value-added performance measures. They could also avoid resegregating schools by considering schools' economic and racial composition.

To ensure that opportunity areas include sufficient rental options, communities might define their thresholds for opportunity areas flexibly.

- **Help families use housing assistance in opportunity neighborhoods and near opportunity schools.** Mobility counseling can provide families with concise, understandable information on neighborhoods and their schools, including how those schools compare with the schools their children currently attend. The federal government can support more and higher-quality mobility counseling, better and simpler ways to provide families with their housing and school options, and more research on effective counseling. This support could include a voucher demonstration to provide access to both opportunity neighborhoods and opportunity schools. The federal government can also help communities encourage landlords in opportunity areas to participate.

This report is divided into five sections that explain the context and consequence of these options. First, the report describes how school poverty is closely associated with children's school performance, how neighborhoods relate, and how housing policies are an important complement to school choice programs. Second, the report details the current state of housing and school segregation, how the relationship between neighborhoods and schools creates a vicious circle, and how families choose homes and schools. Third, the report suggests how stronger institutional relationships and place-based initiatives could improve children's school options. Fourth, the report proposes how affordable housing could be sited near opportunity schools. Fifth, the report describes housing mobility programs, including regional programs, and identifies how to help families with vouchers access opportunity schools as well as opportunity neighborhoods.

Defining Poverty and Performance in Neighborhoods and Schools

Low-poverty neighborhoods have a relatively low proportion of residents living below the federal poverty line. This report refers to census tracts as neighborhoods; census tracts have a population of between 1,200 and 8,000 and are drawn to reflect visible community boundaries.[5] The Census Bureau defines three types of census tracts by the proportion of residents in poverty.[6]

- **Low-poverty areas:** less than 10 percent in poverty.
- **Poverty areas:** more than 20 percent in poverty.
- **Extreme-poverty areas:** more than 40 percent in poverty.

The term "high-poverty areas" commonly refers to areas of 30 to 40 percent poverty.

By comparison, low-poverty schools have a relatively low proportion of enrolled students who are "low income." The U.S. Department of Education defines school-level poverty by the proportion of children who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL).[7]

- **Low-poverty schools:** 25.0 percent or less FRPL-eligible students.
- **Mid-low poverty schools:** 25.1 to 50.0 percent FRPL-eligible students.
- **Mid-high poverty schools:** 50.1 to 75.0 percent FRPL-eligible students.
- **High-poverty schools:** more than 75.0 percent FRPL-eligible students.

The Department of Education describes FRPL-eligible students as "low-income students."

FRPL eligibility is more inclusive than the federal poverty line; students are considered FRPL eligible if their household has an income below 185 percent of the federal poverty threshold. FRPL does not capture broader measures of socioeconomic status, such as parents' education or occupation.[8] FRPL remains the most common measure for school poverty, however, because it is commonly found across surveys, is strongly correlated with district-level poverty, and is related to socioeconomic status at the household level.[9]

The number of public school students designated as low income by FRPL has climbed during the past 30 years.[10] Rising child poverty, economic instability, and increased immigration largely explain this trend,[11] along with a 2010 law that changed how schools may certify their count of FRPL-eligible students.[12]

When discussing school performance, this report refers to "low-performing" and "high-performing" schools on the basis of schools' absolute test scores relative to other schools in the state, without adjusting for student composition. This framing is consistent with HUD's definition of school performance with regard to Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) assessments, while recognizing that other national and local data, including value-added measures and measures that adjust for student composition, can provide a more complete perspective on school performance when available.[13] In comparison, this report refers to "high-quality" schools more broadly, recognizing that a single performance metric may not fully reflect schools' quality.

The Importance of School Poverty and How Neighborhoods Relate

The relationship between school-level poverty, distinct from students' own circumstances, and school performance is well-established. In 1966, the federal Coleman Report declared, "The social composition of the student body is more highly related to achievement, independent of the student's own social background, than is any school factor."[14] As a 2005 study demonstrates, over time the concentration of poverty in a school appears to affect students' achievement as much as students' own socioeconomic status.[15] Controlling for student characteristics, for instance, students at lower-poverty schools are more likely to graduate and attend a 4-year college.[16] Neighborhoods are closely related to school poverty and children's development.

School Poverty and Academic Achievement

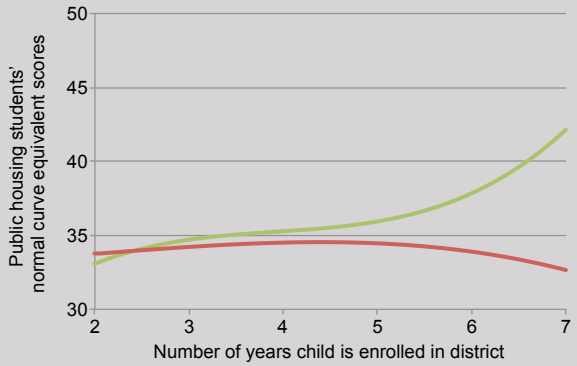
The best experimental evidence on low-poverty schools comes from Heather Schwartz's study of Montgomery County, Maryland. Schwartz's study compared the academic outcomes of the children who lived in public housing and were, effectively, randomly assigned to attend lower-poverty schools (0 to 20 percent FRPL-eligible) or those assigned to higher-poverty schools (20 to 85 percent FRPL-eligible).[17] After 2 years, the students who attended lower-poverty schools began to perform better in reading and math than their peers in higher-poverty schools. After 7 years, the public housing students at lower-poverty schools cut the math achievement gap with their higher-income peers *in half*, while the public housing students at higher-poverty schools showed no relative improvement.[18]

The Montgomery County, Maryland Study

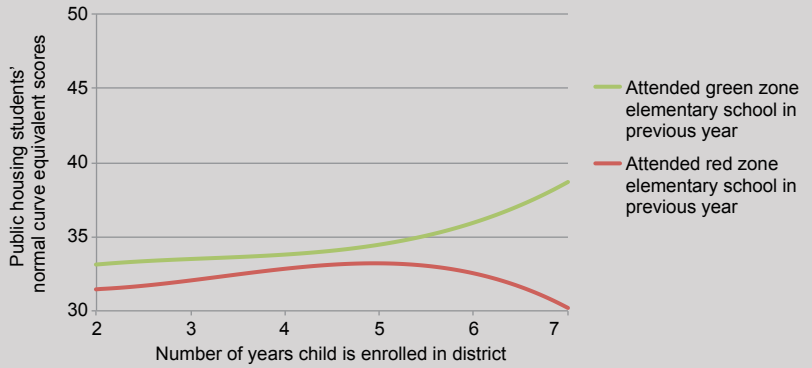
For 30 years, Montgomery County's robust inclusionary zoning program has enabled the county to place families in scattered-site public housing units across the community, including in low-poverty neighborhoods.[19] Families' public housing assignments also determine where their children attend school; nearly all children in the county are assigned to schools based on where they live. Because families are assigned randomly to public housing units, the public housing assignment process created a natural experiment on the effect of low-poverty schools and neighborhoods.[20]

In addition to exploring the effect of low-poverty schools, the Montgomery County study suggests that, in some cases, socioeconomic school integration produces better results than even intensive interventions at high-poverty schools. In 2000, the district employed its own measure of disadvantage and designated half of its elementary schools as "Red Zone" schools and the other, more advantaged, half as "Green Zone" schools.[21] The Red Zone schools received an infusion of resources, such as full-day kindergarten, reduced class sizes, more professional development for teachers, and a new literacy curriculum.[22] The Green Zone public housing students nonetheless far outperformed the Red Zone students after 7 years.[23]

Effect of Attending Green Zone vs. Red Zone Schools, Math Scores



Effect of Attending Green Zone vs. Red Zone Schools, Reading Scores



Source: Schwartz, Heather. 2012. "Housing Policy Is School Policy: Economically Integrative Housing Promotes Academic Success in Montgomery County, Maryland." In *The Future of School Integration: Socioeconomic Diversity as an Education Reform Strategy*, edited by Richard D. Kahlenberg. New York: The Century Foundation Press: 27–66. Used with permission of the author.

It is important to note that the Montgomery County natural experiment combined low-poverty schools *and* low-poverty neighborhoods. Nearly all the public housing children in Schwartz's study of Montgomery County lived in low-poverty neighborhoods.[24, 25]

Evidence from the *Gautreaux* mobility program in Chicago, while less rigorous than Schwartz's study, supports these findings. From 1976 through the late 1990s, thousands of families in public housing or on waiting lists moved from low-income, mostly Black neighborhoods in the city.[26] About one-fifth moved to similarly high-poverty, highly segregated neighborhoods, and four-fifths moved to higher-income and less-segregated neighborhoods,[27] including more than 115 suburbs.[28] Although families had some influence regarding where they moved, most were assigned to neighborhoods in a way that was nearly random.[29]

The *Gautreaux* children attended dramatically different schools. Of the group who moved to the suburbs, 88 percent attended schools with average ACT scores of 20 or higher (out of 36) compared with only 6 percent of the group who moved to neighborhoods in the city;[30] 8 years later, 54 percent of the students who moved to the suburbs attended college compared with 21 percent of students in the city.[31] Also, most families who moved to lower-poverty suburban areas managed to stay; 22 years later, about two-thirds of families placed in the suburbs still lived there.[32]

Challenges of High-Poverty Schools

Children's own economic status affects their success in school. In 2015, the average fourth-grader eligible for free lunch scored about two grade levels lower in math on the National Assessment of Educational Progress.[33] The gap between poor and wealthy students has expanded over the past few decades, and the income achievement gap is now nearly twice the size of the Black-White achievement gap.[34] Moreover, economic poverty alone does not explain gaps in achievement. Other socioeconomic characteristics, such as parents' education, affect children's opportunities.[35]

Individual differences do not fully explain the obstacles high-poverty schools face, however. Schools' concentration of poverty and disadvantage, distinct from children's own socioeconomic status, is a powerful predictor of school performance.[36] Children who are low income *and* attend a high-poverty school face two significant barriers.[37]

Nearly three-fourths of American students attended the public school to which they were assigned in 2007, the most recent year for which national data are available.[38] Many schools are also higher poverty than their neighborhoods because higher-income children attend other schools. Children from higher-income families are far more likely to attend private schools, for example.[39] As a result, high-poverty neighborhoods usually have high-poverty schools.[40]

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Peer Effects

Students' peer groups influence their schools' academic environment and culture. Children at high-poverty schools, by definition, attend school with a higher proportion of students from families in economic need. Greg Palardy finds that the socioeconomic composition of schools affects students' college choice, with peer attitudes as the most significant driver.[41] Analyzing nationwide data on high school sophomores and controlling for individual student characteristics, Palardy suggests that peer effects of high-poverty schools are a primary reason that students at lower-poverty schools are more likely to graduate.[42]

Access to High-Quality, Experienced Teachers

High-poverty schools struggle to attract and retain high-quality, experienced teachers.[43] In general, experienced teachers are more effective,[44] and the first few years of experience are particularly powerful.[45] As teachers become more experienced, they often choose to leave for lower-poverty schools, even within the same district;[46] 14.5 percent of teachers at high-poverty schools are in their first or second year of teaching compared with 9.5 percent of teachers at low-poverty schools—and over three times as many teachers at high-poverty schools lack certification.[47]

Classrooms in higher-poverty schools tend to be more difficult to manage, as low-income children are more likely to struggle in the classroom and have behavior and attention problems.[48] Children in a given class at a high-poverty school are far more likely to face economic and social stresses. Compared with a low-poverty school, a high-poverty California high school's typical class has more than three times as many students experiencing hunger; four times as many lacking medical care; five times as many experiencing immigration issues; and three times as many with concerns about safety.[49] These stresses can cut into children's learning; a UCLA study estimates that high-poverty schools lose 28 percent of instructional time to delayed starts, daily routines, or interruptions compared with 19 percent at low-poverty schools.[50]

Poor working conditions at high-poverty schools also contribute to high

turnover; school leadership, school culture, parent engagement, and student discipline affect teachers' decisions to leave.[51] Although high-poverty schools can improve by addressing their working conditions—as a number of schools have proven[52]—other issues, such as high-poverty schools' lack of resources, can make it difficult for them to do so.

Unstable Environments for Learning

Higher-poverty schools are often less stable environments. Both teachers and students are more likely to move in and out at high-poverty schools.[53] Teachers in high-poverty schools are more likely to be hired after the school year begins or to be absentee, disrupting children's learning.[54] Students who attend higher-poverty schools are more likely to feel unsafe in school.[55] High-poverty schools are also much more likely than low-poverty schools to adopt counterproductive zero-tolerance policies associated with negative long-term outcomes for both schools and children; schools that serve the most disadvantaged children suspend students at a disproportionate rate that risk factors like poverty and achievement cannot fully explain.[56]

High-Poverty Schools Lack Necessary Academic Resources

Children in high-poverty schools are more likely to lack essential support structures and staff, such as guidance counselors.[57] Low-income children, as a result, have fewer resources even when they are more than twice as likely to have suffered traumas.[58] Children in distressed neighborhoods are also disproportionately likely to have disabilities[59] but are less likely to receive special services through an Individualized Education Plan,[60] which federal law requires for all children with disabilities in public schools. High-poverty schools, however, are also more likely to struggle to attract highly qualified special education teachers.[61]

Students at high-poverty, racially isolated schools often lack access to both core and advanced classes. For example, one-fourth of high schools with the highest proportions of Black and Latino students do not offer Algebra II.[62] In the 100 largest school districts, only 69 percent of high-poverty high schools offer physics compared with 90 percent of low-poverty schools.[63]

Although the impact of spending more on schools has been debated, little doubt exists that many high-need schools lack the resources to adequately serve their students. For instance, students at higher-poverty schools fall behind in reading skills between third and eighth grades, perhaps because high-poverty middle schools are "particularly ill-equipped to meet the needs of struggling readers."[64] High-poverty, racially isolated schools often must deal with less money per student than lower-poverty schools.[65] Housing policies contribute to this resource gap. In nearly all states, schools are largely financed by property taxes, so the community's housing wealth determines the extent of local school funding.[66] Property-poor communities, which also tend to be lower income, can set much higher property tax rates but still raise less money than wealthier communities.[67]

Parents' Involvement in Schools

Parents' involvement in school is associated with better outcomes for children.[68] Low-income parents are often deeply concerned with their children's academic success and support their children with home-based practices.[69] But logistical challenges for low-income families—such as inflexible work schedules, transportation challenges, or issues with language access[70]—mean that parents at high-poverty schools are less likely to visit schools and participate during the school day.[71] Middle-class parents, by comparison, are more likely to establish a "norm of parental oversight" related to their child's education.[72]

Because Children's School Options Are Largely Determined by Their Neighborhoods, Housing Policy Is an Important Complement to School Choice

Whether children can attend a high-quality school is largely determined by where they live. Higher-poverty neighborhoods tend to also have lower-performing, higher-poverty schools. In 76 percent of neighborhoods with poverty rates over 20 percent, the local elementary schools,[73] on average, rank in the bottom half by school performance; in 86 percent of such neighborhoods, the elementary schools average poverty rates over 50 percent.[74]

Districts' school assignment plans can promote integration and help more children access lower-poverty and higher-performing schools. At least 91 school districts and charter networks, educating more than 4 million students, are implementing socioeconomic integration plans using school assignment;[75] these plans often include transportation for children who are not attending their neighborhood school. Districts' school assignment plans can include school choice programs, which can enable students to transfer to schools outside their neighborhood, whether traditional public schools or charter schools.

School choice strategies, however, have downsides. Choice programs that do not control for integration can actually increase segregation, and low-income children often do not move to higher-performing schools. For example, Denver's between-districts school choice program appears to have increased socioeconomic segregation between schools.[76] Low-income parents tend to be less knowledgeable about their children's options for schools and less able to take advantage. They may struggle to provide their children with transportation to a school that is farther from their home—many districts do not provide free transportation for students who use choice.[77]

Higher-income families who live in relatively higher-poverty neighborhoods, by contrast, are better equipped to know about and use choice programs to attend higher-performing schools. As a result, many neighborhoods that are economically mixed also have high-poverty schools. In New York City, for example, 124 of the city's 734 neighborhood elementary schools are much higher poverty than their neighborhoods.[78] In general, when private, magnet, and charter schools are in an area, the local neighborhood schools tend to be more racially segregated.[79]

School choice programs also cannot fully compensate for residential segregation. In some communities, schools of choice are located far from the district's failing schools.[80] When they do change schools, low-income children often move to other low-performing schools. A recent study of school choice in Chicago found that children attending the lowest-performing schools—which are clustered in high-poverty neighborhoods—were most likely to move to other low-performing schools if they transferred.[81] Charter schools nationwide enroll a disproportionate number of low-income children and are more likely to be high-poverty schools.[82]

Moreover, school choice programs that allow for children to move between schools in a single district cannot provide many children with access to low-poverty schools if concentrated poverty exists throughout the district. For example, 71 percent of students in New York City and 83 percent in Chicago public schools are low income.[83] Although school choice programs between school districts can address that problem,[84] few communities have implemented entirely open between-district choice programs.[85] Today, "open enrollment" programs—through which students can request admission to schools outside their home district, often without funding for transportation—are much more common.[86]

School choice programs also have costs for students who participate. In Chicago, for example, many low-income children attend schools of choice but must travel long distances to do so,[87] often using public transportation.[88] By comparison, children in high-income Chicago neighborhoods are much more likely to stay at their local schools; living in these areas saves them both the cost of traveling and of navigating school choice systems.[89] In New Orleans, which no longer has neighborhood schools, the average student lived 3.4 miles from school in 2011–12, 1.5 miles farther than in 2004–05.[90]

School and Neighborhood Effects Are Related

Housing interventions are essential complements to school assignment strategies because neighborhoods and schools have interrelated effects on children's development.[91] Although many factors affect children's development—for instance, family structure and stability[92]—neighborhoods and schools are closely linked. For instance, within a few years, living in a severely disadvantaged neighborhood affects

Student Assignment Policies

Student assignment policies determine which school a student will attend. In the United States, students are traditionally assigned to schools based on the neighborhoods in which they livae. Local districts draw the geographic boundaries for any given school, which are called the attendance area or catchment zone.[93] Over the past half-century, student assignment policies have evolved. In some areas, race-conscious school desegregation plans provided for some students to be assigned to schools outside of their neighborhood, both within and outside of the district in which they lived. Many race-conscious programs have disappeared over the past decades, however, due to both courts' reluctance to continue judicial oversight of desegregation plans and to resistance from communities.

School choice programs, which allow for children to choose schools other than those to which they are assigned based on their neighborhood, have emerged over the past few decades. School choice can refer to a range of strategies, including the availability of charter schools, magnet schools, school vouchers, or private schools and also programs that allow for students to voluntarily transfer to other traditional public schools. Parents often must apply to individual schools or through a broader school assignment system, entering into school lotteries or ranking their school preferences. In New Orleans, for instance, parents apply to all schools through an open admissions lottery.[94]

Choice programs can operate both within districts and between districts. A within-district program allows for children to apply for schools within their initial district; a between-district program allows for children to apply to schools both within and outside their initial district.

Controlled choice programs allow for families to prefer schools while districts maintain racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic balance among schools. For example, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the district weighs parents' choices and schools' poverty when determining how to assign children to schools.[95]

Black children's verbal ability as much as if they had missed an entire year of school.[96] Long-term exposure to disadvantaged neighborhoods produces dramatic disparities; Black children are far more likely to graduate from high school if they grow up in the top fifth of most-advantaged neighborhoods (96 percent) instead of the bottom fifth (76 percent).[97]

Some of the most effective interventions have addressed both neighborhoods and schools. The Montgomery County and *Gautreaux* experiments measured the effects of moves to better neighborhoods, moves to lower-poverty, higher-performing schools, and the provision of stable, affordable housing. It is difficult to separate the effects of neighborhoods and schools because the two contexts are so closely related.[98]

How Neighborhoods May Affect Children

Neighborhoods and schools offer multiple, potentially complementary levers to support children's growth. Neighborhoods can affect children through the quality of social services, peer influences, or physical isolation.[99] "[W]idespread distrust, fear of violence, and isolating physical landscapes" in severely disadvantaged communities may limit children's exposure to positive social interactions, affecting their verbal ability.[100] A lack of local job opportunities can make children's home life more difficult.[101]

In particular, stressful and unsafe environments in high-poverty neighborhoods[102] can make it difficult for children to succeed in whichever school they attend. Exposure to violence in children's neighborhoods is associated with sharp declines in performance on English tests a week later.[103]

Evidence from the Moving to Opportunity for Fair Housing (MTO) experiment demonstrates how higher-opportunity neighborhoods can make a difference over a long period of time. Launched in 1994, MTO compared three randomized groups of low-income families in five major metropolitan areas: (1) an "experimental group," which received housing vouchers with conditions and assistance; (2) a group that received housing vouchers without conditions or additional assistance; and (3) a control group, which received no vouchers but remained eligible for other housing assistance. The experimental group families could use their vouchers only in census tracts with poverty rates below 10 percent,[104] although they could move again a year later. The experimental group families also received mobility counseling and help leasing a new unit.[105]

New research has illuminated how MTO benefited participating children.[106] In 2015, Raj Chetty, Nathaniel Hendren, and Lawrence Katz used MTO data to demonstrate that, for some children, moving to lower-poverty neighborhoods through MTO produced better educational outcomes and earnings as adults.[107] They also showed that children's age at the time of the move makes a big difference. Distinct from earlier research, this study separated the children into two groups: (1) children who were at least 13 years of age at the time the study began and (2) those who were younger than 13. Chetty, Hendren, and Katz found that younger children in the experimental group were more likely to graduate from college and earned more as adults.[108]

Living in safer, less stressful neighborhoods might explain how these children fared better. Families who moved perceived their new neighborhoods as much safer, reducing their stress, and adults experienced better physical and mental health.[109] These benefits were linked primarily to neighborhoods, not schools: most MTO students attended substantially similar, low-performing schools within the same district, even when they moved to low-poverty areas.[110] Younger children whose families received regular Section 8 vouchers—that is, without the requirement to move to low-poverty neighborhoods—also benefited, but far less than that the experimental group that was required to move to low-poverty areas.[111]

The older children, both boys and girls, appeared to fare worse when they moved. This outcome may have happened because the move was especially disruptive for adolescents.[112] Earlier research found that male youths in the experimental group were more likely to engage in risky behavior than their peers in the control group[113]—although this outcome might be limited to boys with stressful family situations, such as having a family member with a disability.[114] By comparison, although the best experimental evidence on school poverty concerns elementary school students, high school students also appear to benefit from low-poverty schools.[115]

Interactions of Neighborhoods and Schools

The combination of opportunity neighborhoods and schools is important. In fact, controlling for students' socioeconomic status, one study finds that students from higher-poverty neighborhoods perform worse at lower-poverty schools, while students from lower-poverty neighborhoods do better.[116]

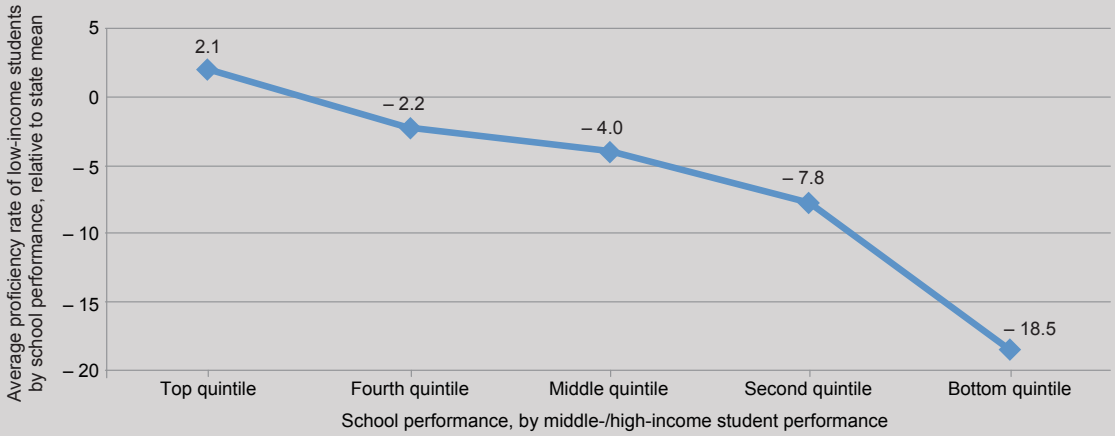
This phenomenon might occur because children who live in low-income neighborhoods are less equipped to compete with children at middle-class schools.[117] Even if low-income students perform better overall, they might struggle to integrate into middle-class schools.[118] Through the "frog pond" effect, students evaluate and identify themselves relative to other students. If low-income students face stronger "competition" at higher-performing schools, they might face new stresses and benefit less from these schools. Research by Robert Crosnoe suggests that low-income students experience more psychosocial problems when they attend high schools with a higher proportion of middle- and high-income students and children with college-educated parents.[119]

Within-school segregation also remains a challenge; lower-income children and children of color are disproportionately tracked into lower-level classes to an extent unexplained by differences in performance.[120] In Montgomery County, the lower-income children who moved tended to test into and be placed in lower-level math classes, which included a higher proportion of low-income and non-White children.[121]

In spite of these challenges, evidence suggests that low-income students more often succeed at higher-performing schools. In 2012, Jonathan Rothwell of The Brookings Institution demonstrated that low-income students perform better on state exams at higher-performing schools.[122] The differences are large; low-income students at the top fifth of schools scored 2.1 points *above* the state average, while low-income students at the bottom fifth of schools scored 18.6 points *below*.[123]

Schools can also reduce the friction of integration.[124] For instance, schools can affirmatively address the issue of "tracking" children into different programs.[125] One possible solution is differentiated instruction, which aims to make learning collaborative and engaging for diverse learners.[126]

Low-Income Student Proficiency and School Performance



Source: Rothwell, Jonathan. 2012. *Housing Costs, Zoning, and Access to High-Scoring Schools.* Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution. http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/papers/2012/4/19-school-inequality-rothwell/0419_school_inequality_rothwell.pdf. From National Center on Education Statistics (NCES) and GreatSchools test score data from 51,613 schools in 35 states plus the District of Columbia, with averages weighted by NCES enrollment data.

Children's Access to Opportunity Neighborhoods and Schools

Low-poverty neighborhoods and schools can make big differences in children's lives. Today, however, many low-income children and children of color live in neighborhoods and attend schools that put them at risk. The economic divide appears to be growing; since 1990, families with children have become more economically segregated both by the school district in which they live and the schools that their children attend.[127] Racial differences—related to but distinct from economic segregation—also affect children's access to opportunity neighborhoods and schools. Although neighborhoods[128] and schools[129] became modestly more integrated by race in the 2000s, significant racial segregation persists.[130]

High-Poverty Neighborhoods and Schools

From 2009 to 2013, 10.1 million U.S. children (14 percent of all U.S. children) lived in high-poverty neighborhoods—an increase of 3.8 million children from 2000.[131] Children of color are much more likely to live in these areas; about one-third of Black children lived in high-poverty neighborhoods over that period.[132] Many families have experienced poverty for generations, with serious consequences for their children's outcomes. When families live in a poor neighborhood over two consecutive generations, the effect on children is similar to that of missing 2 to 4 years of schooling.[133] Black families are disproportionately affected; 72 percent of Black families who lived in the most segregated, poorest neighborhoods today also lived there in the 1970s.[134]

Low-income children also tend to attend schools that are high poverty and lower performing. Nationwide, about 40 percent of low-income students attend a high-poverty school.[135] Low-income students on average attend schools ranked 20 percentage points below the schools of middle- and high-income students.[136] The concentration of school poverty is closely related to race; high-poverty schools tend to be racially isolated as well.[137] Black and Hispanic students are more than

five times as likely to attend a high-poverty school as compared with White students,[138] and English learners are far more likely to attend high-poverty schools.[139]

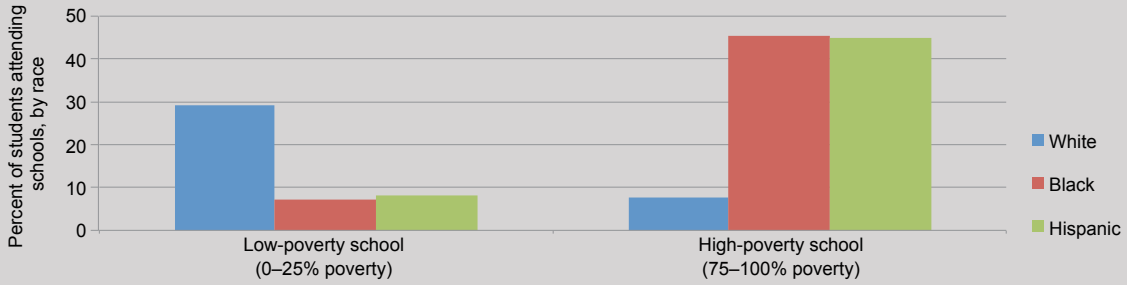
Like low-income families in general, HUD-assisted residents with children are much more likely to live near low-performing, high-poverty schools. Even though housing vouchers have the potential to enable moves to areas of opportunity, most families with vouchers do not live near low-poverty, high-performing schools. The school nearest to a typical family with a housing voucher has 74 percent low-income students and ranks at the 26th percentile by state test scores; low-poverty schools are nearest to only 7 percent of families with vouchers.[140] Only one-fourth of children with vouchers attend schools ranked in the top half by performance, and the average child with a voucher attends a school ranked at the bottom fourth in math and reading scores.[141] In fact, voucher-holding families with children are more likely to live nearest to schools with higher levels of poverty and racial concentration than other poor families with children.[142] In addition, among voucher families, the schools nearest to children of color tend to be lower performing and higher poverty than those nearest to White children.[143]

Low-poverty schools are nearest to only 7 percent of families with vouchers.

The Lines Matter: Regional and School Boundaries

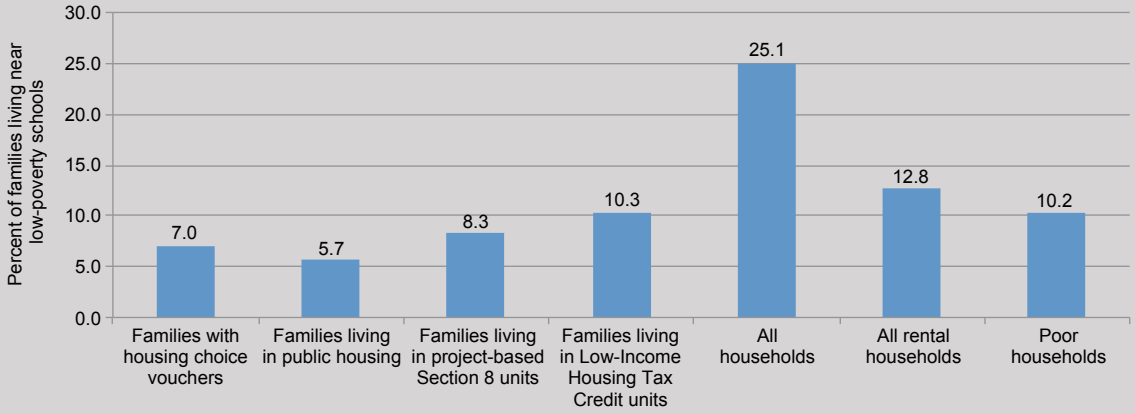
The borders that define cities and school districts set the stage for access to opportunity neighborhoods and schools. American metropolitan areas are often divided into hundreds of smaller units of government, such as counties, municipalities, and school districts. Nearly all school districts are independent entities, with their own elected boards and taxing powers.[144] For historical reasons, the Northeast and Midwest are particularly fragmented.[145]

Proportion of Students Attending Type of School, Grouped by Race



Source: National Center for Education Statistics. 2014. "Table 216.60: Number and Percentage Distribution of Public School Students, by Percentage of Students in School Who Are Eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch, School Level, Locale, and Student Race/Ethnicity: 2012–13." http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14_216.60.asp.

Proportion of Families With Children Living Nearest to a Low-Poverty School



Source: Ellen, Ingrid Gould, and Keren Horn. 2012. *Do Federally Assisted Households Have Access to High Performing Public Schools?* Poverty & Race Research Action Council. http://prrac.org/pdf/PRRACHousingLocation&Schools.pdf.

The sheer number of local governments complicates regional planning for inclusive housing, transportation, and schools. In practice, these public entities rarely work together across issue areas; school districts only rarely work with local housing or transportation institutions.[146]

When regions are more fragmented, they tend to be more residentially segregated by race and class.[147] White flight to the suburbs in the middle of the 20th century—resulting from and supported by government policies, many of them racially motivated and segregative[148]—entrenched segregation, often separating groups into separate districts and municipalities.[149] Although poverty in American suburbs has deepened,[150] children who live in the suburbs are less than one-half as likely to attend a high-poverty school as are students who live in cities.[151] In addition, although residential segregation by race has declined over the past few decades, Paul Jargowsky estimates that, at the pace of change from 1990 to today, it would take 150 years to reduce segregation between Black and White residents to a relatively low level.[152]

There is a "reciprocal and cyclical relationship between school and housing segregation," as Genevieve Siegel-Hawley writes.[153] The Supreme Court has recognized this relationship in several cases from *Brown* v. *Board of Education* onward.[154] On the other hand, school integration can also promote residential integration. Southern metropolitan areas with school desegregation plans experienced more Black-White residential desegregation than similar regions that did not implement such plans.[155]

In regions where school districts are most fragmented, districts also tend to be most segregated by both race and socioeconomic status.[156] School integration may become more difficult when students are separated into separate districts. Because most communities do not have integration plans between districts, between-district segregation limits how much school integration can possibly occur.[157] Segregation between districts can also exacerbate school funding disparities.[158] And, the process by which districts have fragmented could increase segregation.[159] Recent research by Meredith Richards and Kori Stroub finds that regions with less fragmented districts shift existing segregation into a different frame; these regions have more segregation *within* each district.[160]

Rothwell estimates that if metropolitan areas eliminated exclusionary zoning, they could lower their test score gaps by 4 to 7 percent as low-income students gain access to higher-quality schools.

Schools and their attendance zones define neighborhoods. Both school and school district lines, like electoral districts, are commonly gerrymandered; the lines are drawn to include or exclude particular communities in striking ways. In most communities, and especially those experiencing swift racial or ethnic change, gerrymandering increases segregation.[161] In many areas, students are segregated not only between school districts but also between schools within a given district.[162]

The Vicious Circle of Housing and School Exclusion

Communities' planning choices can determine whether low-income families can live within their borders and attend their schools. Higher-income communities often restrict the construction of affordable housing, such as multifamily developments, effectively excluding low-income families and blocking their children from attending these communities' lower-poverty schools.[163] Zoning plays a significant role. Rothwell estimates that housing cost gaps are 40 to 63 percentage points lower in large metropolitan areas with the least restrictive zoning ordinances compared with those with the most exclusionary policies.[164] In fact, Rothwell estimates that if metropolitan areas eliminated exclusionary zoning, they could lower their test score gaps by 4 to 7 percent as low-income students gain access to higher-quality schools.[165]

Housing prices tend to reflect the performance and demographics of the local schools. Schools can draw families to a neighborhood, increasing demand and prices.[166] For some parents, this information is front and center during their search. Zillow.com, for example, shows what schools are near homes and also provides the schools' performance on a 1-to-10 scale.[167] In the top 100 largest metropolitan areas, housing costs almost $11,000 more per year—an average of 2.4 times more—near high-scoring public schools compared with lower-scoring ones.[168] Homes in the same neighborhood but at opposite sides of elementary school attendance boundaries differ in price, related to their schools' performance.[169] School characteristics can also push families away from neighborhoods.[170] Evidence suggests that homebuyers are willing to pay much more to live not only near high-scoring schools but also near schools that are less racially diverse.[171] That is, homebuyers use schools' demographics as a proxy for quality—just like they use race to evaluate neighborhoods.[172]

These factors create a vicious circle that frustrates the formation of inclusive communities and schools. As Myron Orfield points out, "as the number of poor children grows, demand for local housing gradually declines."[173] When home prices decline, property tax revenues also fall.[174] Because schools are predominantly funded by local property taxes, schools in lower-income areas suffer funding deficits—many are not funded as much as wealthier schools, even though lower-income students often need more resources and support to succeed.[175] Municipalities raise property taxes to account for declining revenues, discouraging businesses and higher-income residents from moving in.[176] Although state education funding formulas are supposed to offset these deficits, many are underfunded.[177]

Siting Affordable Housing

The location of fixed-place subsidized housing can affect families' access to high-quality neighborhoods and schools. As Ingrid Gould Ellen and Keren Horn demonstrated, families living in public housing or project-based Section 8 units tend to live near higher-poverty, lower-performing schools than the typical poor family.[178]

In comparison, families living in LIHTC units tend to live near slightly higher-performing and lower-poverty schools than the typical poor family but near lower-performing and higher-poverty schools than the typical renter.[179] Placing LIHTC units in both high-poverty neighborhoods undergoing reinvestment and low-poverty neighborhoods can support mobility and invest in community revitalization. Rules and state plans related to the LIHTC Program, however, can encourage developers to place financed properties in high-poverty neighborhoods without accompanying neighborhood revitalization initiatives.[180] LIHTC rules are critical because the program is the federal government's primary means of financing low-income rental housing production. States allocate their federal LIHTCs according to state-level Qualified Allocation Plans (QAPs). The QAPs establish criteria that determine which proposed developments receive the more lucrative 9 percent tax credits. Recent research shows that QAPs can have a powerful influence over where developments are sited; developers respond to these incentives.[181]

How Families Choose Homes and Schools

Beyond the availability of affordable housing, low-income families and people of color often lack the opportunity to find and secure housing near high-quality schools. Enduring unlawful housing discrimination plays a role. Families with children may experience significant discrimination in the rental market and are also more likely to be evicted.[182] Minority homebuyers are often told about and shown fewer housing units.[183] Regarding schools, paired testing studies suggest that real estate agents often treat Black and Latino families very differently than White families.[184] Agents are much more likely to mention schools to White families than to Black and Latino families.[185] When agents do discuss schools with Black and Latino families, they are often directed toward schools that White families are told to avoid.[186]

Choosing Neighborhoods

Families also have very different knowledge of potential neighborhoods, often across racial lines. Maria Krysan and Michael Bader's 2009 study asked residents in Chicago to look at a map with 41 representative area neighborhoods and mark any neighborhoods that they "didn't know anything about."[187] The study found that Black and White families had distinct "blind spots," related to both distance and socioeconomic characteristics. Black respondents were least likely to know about distant "all-White" suburbs, while White respondents were largely unaware of mostly Black communities and also much less aware of Black-White integrated communities.[188] As Krysan, Bader, and Kyle Crowder write, "information about housing options is both cause and consequence of segregation."[189]

These individual "blind spots" determine families' choices of neighborhoods, perpetuating existing residential segregation on a broad scale.[190] Families' moves tend to reinforce segregation in the long run, as racial and ethnic minorities are far less likely than White families to make long-range moves to integrated areas.[191] In addition, although young Black adults often move into integrated neighborhoods, those neighborhoods are typically transitioning to become more segregated and higher poverty—like the neighborhoods they left.[192]

Choosing Schools

Families also have distinct sets of knowledge about schools. Both low-income and higher-income families tend to seek out schools and neighborhoods with people "like them," guided by both preferences and social networks.[193] The differences in families' knowledge and choices, however, contribute to persistent school segregation.

Higher-income families tend to choose homes with the local schools in mind.[194] They can enjoy a less stressful decision-making process, unburdened by the severe economic constraints low-income families may experience. In general, higher-income families tend to rely on social networks that know about lower-poverty, higher-performing schools.[195] Higher-income families often assume school quality based on perceptions of status, as opposed to actual test scores.[196] Race and geography also intersect; White families and suburban families are more likely to move to neighborhoods expressly so their child can attend a school.[197]

Low-income families, by comparison, tend to choose housing first and then schools.[198] An array of barriers affects low-income families as they choose schools and homes.

- **Stressful housing moves often precede school decisions.** Low-income families often move under urgent circumstances, as their apartments "literally crumble around them."[199] Because they need to find housing immediately, families end up choosing units in higher-poverty neighborhoods near higher-poverty schools.

- **Resources and other stresses constrain families' choices.** Transportation, economics, and access to childcare can limit the options available to low-income families, even when they care a great deal about their children's schools.[200]

- **Families often lack key information on school options.** Although some MTO experimental group families explicitly chose schools when moving, they tended to be "information poor" about their options.[201] Less than one-half of parents who explicitly chose schools took specific steps to find out which schools in their area were high performing.[202] Families typically made school decisions based on referrals from families and friends, who also had limited information.[203]

- **Choosing schools can be difficult.** When low-income families do choose schools, the "choice architecture" of the process can be very difficult to navigate.[204] Low-income families are much less likely to collect performance data on schools compared with middle- and upper middle-class families.[205]

- **Families may not know their children can attend higher-performing schools or may be skeptical of the impact of school quality.** Some parents may believe that their children do not score high enough to attend higher-performing schools—and districts might lead them to think that.[206] Low-income parents are also more likely to be more skeptical of the effect of school quality, believing that effort is most important.[207]

- **Families are concerned with safety and disruptions.** In the MTO demonstration, parents were often concerned with schools' safety, which could mean keeping their children at their old schools. Even if those schools were dangerous, parents considered them to be known quantities.[208] Other parents believed that school transfers would be disruptive—[209]which can be true, especially if students repeatedly change schools.[210]

Barriers to Opportunity Moves Using Housing Choice Vouchers

Families with housing vouchers tend to live in lower-poverty and safer neighborhoods than families in public housing, with project-based rental assistance, or without housing assistance.[211] Many families with vouchers, however, have not managed to move to low-poverty, high-opportunity neighborhoods with high-quality schools.[212] Instead, several factors related to vouchers help explain why families who want to move to such areas[213] struggle to do so.

- **Difficult housing markets.** Housing markets can make it more difficult to secure housing in opportunity areas. In regions that are more racially segregated and regions with tighter housing markets, families with vouchers are less likely to live near high-performing schools.[214]

- **Difficulty finding units.** Searching for new homes is difficult, and families with vouchers often lack information about housing in opportunity areas—if they even know of possible neighborhoods. Mobility counseling is expensive, so many public housing agencies are unable to provide it.[215] Families can struggle to find housing within the voucher rent limits that is also close to public transportation and affordable childcare.[216] Also, low-income families who do identify a unit might lack a car, making it difficult to see the unit and meet with a prospective landlord.[217]

- **Moving on short notice.** Many families move off the voucher waiting list on short notice, and others are forced to move because of quality issues with their previous units.[218] The typical 60-day limit to use vouchers is short, so families are less likely to pursue opportunity neighborhoods and schools—and instead choose landlords whom they know will not refuse them.[219]

- **Limits on allowable rents.** In most areas, allowable rents are capped based on metropolitanwide data, even though rents are often very different among neighborhoods.[220] That can mean that few units in opportunity areas, which tend to be higher-cost rental markets, are eligible for families with vouchers—and the few units that are eligible might be much smaller than those in lower-opportunity areas. HUD has proposed addressing this issue in areas where voucher households are most concentrated in poverty with Small Area Fair Market Rents, which would set allowable rents at the ZIP Code level rather than the entire metropolitan-area level.[221] Evidence from one city found that this method did not increase overall voucher costs in that city.[222]

- **Logistical barriers to accessing opportunity neighborhoods.** Many communities have few affordable units located in opportunity neighborhoods. Voucher holders can request to use their voucher in another PHA's jurisdiction (called "porting"), but this process requires extra paperwork and historically has been less straightforward than it could be.[223] In 2015, HUD promulgated a rule to streamline the portability process.[224]

- **Landlord and community resistance.** Some landlords refuse to take tenants with vouchers,[225] and no federal source-of-income discrimination law exists. Many landlords are put off by the paperwork and inspection

requirements for vouchers. Communities sometimes resist voucher tenants.[226]

- **Struggling to afford other moving costs.** Many families struggle to afford the security and utility deposits for units in opportunity neighborhoods.[227]

When families do manage to secure housing in opportunity areas, they may need long-term support to help them successfully transition to their new neighborhoods and reap the longer-term benefits of lower-poverty neighborhoods and schools.[228] Many MTO families, for instance, did not stay in their new neighborhoods long. An Urban Institute study found that, on average, experimental group families lived in "high-opportunity" neighborhoods for only 22 percent of the time in the 10 years after MTO began.[229]

Coordination Across Education, Housing, and Transportation Planning

As a foundation for other strategies, coordination across education, housing, and transportation entities can align policies to promote access to schools of opportunity. Within the federal government, HUD and the Department of Education have recently worked together on initiatives related to education, such as the Promise Zones and Choice Neighborhoods programs. HUD and the Department of Education could partner to promote housing and school integration.

Housing-Education Partnerships To Support Students

Moving to a new neighborhood and away from family and friends can be difficult, and not all families who live near high-poverty, low-performing schools want to or are able to move. High-poverty schools tend to struggle in part because their students encounter disproportionate barriers outside the classroom. Housing agencies and schools can work together to support students attending high-poverty or low-performing schools, building on

Local Strategies for Housing-Education Planning

Barrier	Potential Strategy	Explanation and Examples
Cross-cutting relationships easily fall through unless institutionalized[a]	Support cross-cutting partnerships with dedicated staff and regular meetings	San Francisco, for instance, has designated a single official to coordinate between education and housing organizations.[b]
Cross-cutting problems occur at the regional level	Involve metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) in education planning	Cross-cutting partnerships might be especially effective at the regional level. The University of California, Berkeley, Center for Cities and Schools recommends that regional planning organizations consider educational quality and capacity in their planning processes.[c] MPOs, which traditionally focus on transportation, could also focus on education.
Families often struggle to navigate school and housing decisions	Education leaders help design housing mobility programs	As Genevieve Siegel Hawley suggests, a coordinated school-housing mobility program could align school transportation and information about neighborhoods and schools.[b]
Where schools are built does not necessarily reflect housing plans	Involve housing leaders in school housing decisions	In particular, the school siting process could align with plans for neighborhood development, such as placing a desirable school in an area accessible to low-income children.

[a] See McKoy, Deborah L., Jeffrey M. Vincent, and Ariel H. Bierbaum. 2011a. *Opportunity-Rich Schools and Sustainable Communities: Seven Steps To Align High-Quality Education With Innovations in City and Metropolitan Planning and Development.* Berkeley, CA: University of California, Berkeley, Center for Cities and Schools. http://citiesandschools.berkeley.edu/reports/ccs_wwc_report.pdf.

[b] Siegel-Hawley, Genevieve. Forthcoming. When the Fences Come Down: Twenty-First Century Lessons From Metropolitan School Desegregation. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

[c] McKoy, Deborah L., Jeffrey M. Vincent, and Ariel H. Bierbaum. 2011b. *Growth & Opportunity: Aligning High-Quality Public Education & Sustainable Communities Planning in the Bay Area.* University of California, Berkeley, Center for Cities and Schools. http://citiesandschools.berkeley.edu/reports/ccs-focus_policy_report_final_june2011.pdf.

students' strengths and breaking down barriers. These initiatives can also support promising school improvement strategies such as evidence-based comprehensive school reform programs, career academies, and small high schools.[230]

Recent housing-school partnerships have involved programs ranging from pre-K to workforce readiness.[231] More than 20 PHAs are participating in The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading through a variety of initiatives, such as creating community libraries for young learners, sharing data with local schools, and providing food and clothing to assisted families with chronically absent children.[232]

In New Haven, Connecticut, for instance, the local housing authority, Elm City Communities (ECC), has supported children receiving housing assistance through an array of programs. ECC partners with local schools to identify individual children's needs, provide individual case management, and offer families assistance such as homework help and mental health support. ECC also provides platforms to help parents engage in their children's education, including parent support networks that discuss such topics as navigating the school system and college costs.[233]

School Integration and Neighborhood Revitalization

Neighborhood revitalization efforts that achieve mixed-income communities may not result in integrated schools. Higher-income and White families who move into transitioning neighborhoods often do not send their children to the neighborhood school, instead choosing private schools, charters, or other public schools through choice programs.[234] Even controlling for both neighborhood demographics and school performance by test scores, families are more likely to enroll their children in private school when they live in neighborhoods with greater income inequality.[235] Perhaps as a result, starting first grade in a gentrifying neighborhood is not associated with better test scores in elementary school.[236]

Magnet schools, which provide specialized curricula to attract students from a variety of backgrounds, can provide integrated, higher-quality schools for low-income students living in revitalizing neighborhoods. Research suggests that magnet schools can achieve better academic outcomes while serving more racially and socioeconomically diverse students as compared with other public schools.[237] Place-based programs, such as Choice Neighborhoods, can explicitly incorporate the magnet school model alongside other school improvement strategies.

Place-Based Strategies

Barrier	Potential Strategy	Explanation
Housing-related challenges affect students' success in school	Public housing agencies (PHAs) partner with schools	PHAs can work with schools to support students in many ways. A recent review by the Urban Institute identified seven key elements of housing and education partnerships: (1) shared goals and joint strategies, (2) effective leaders and staff members, (3) partnerships with strong service providers, (4) flexible funding sources, (5) promising programs and services, (6) data for decisionmaking, and (7) systems and protocols for coordination.[a]
As neighborhoods integrate, schools often lag behind	Emphasize high-quality, integrated schools in place-based rating criteria	Place-based programs that aim to revitalize neighborhoods—such as Choice Neighborhoods, Promise Neighborhoods, and Promise Zones—could emphasize access to high-quality, integrated schools. Communities could plan to create both mixed-income communities and mixed-income schools as part of their revitalization initiative.
Higher-income families in revitalizing areas often do not send their children to neighborhood schools	Promote magnet schools through federal grant programs	Magnet schools were introduced to reduce racial school isolation.[b] The federal Magnet School Assistance Program has promoted voluntary racial segregation.[c] In 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act prioritized magnet schools that promote socioeconomic integration.[d]
Low-income families struggle to navigate complicated school choice programs	Help families understand their school options as part of revitalization initiatives	Many areas where place-based programs operate are located in school districts with school choice programs. Neighborhood revitalization programs could help families in their neighborhoods better understand the process and their options.

[a] Gallagher, Megan. 2015. *Developing Housing and Education Partnerships: Lessons from the Field.* Washington, DC: Urban Institute. http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/alfresco/publication-pdfs/2000181-Developing-Housing-and-Education-Partnerships.pdf.

[b] See U.S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement. 2004. *Creating Successful Magnet Schools Programs.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement. https://www2.ed.gov/admins/comm/choice/magnet/report.pdf.

[c] Mantil, Ann, Anne G. Perkins, and Stephanie Aberger. 2012. "The Challenge of High-Poverty Schools: How Feasible Is Socioeconomic School Integration?" In *The Future of School Integration: Socioeconomic Diversity as an Education Reform Strategy*, edited by Richard D. Kahlenberg. New York: The Century Foundation Press: 115–222.

[d] Every Student Succeeds Act, S. 1177, 114th Congress (2015).

Encourage Affordable Housing Development and Use Near High-Quality Schools

An array of related federal actions, such as the proposed Small Area Fair Market Rents rule and administrative fees rule, could improve families' mobility prospects. In addition to taking these steps, the federal government could promote affordable housing development and voucher utilization near high-quality schools through existing programs; bonuses could define these high-quality schools in reference to the new school accountability systems that the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act provides.[238] The act requires states to incorporate multiple measures of student success, along with test scores, into their accountability systems and to provide breakdowns for subgroups, such as economically disadvantaged students. These systems must enable states to meaningfully differentiate all public schools.[239]

Options To Encourage Affordable Housing Development and Voucher Utilization Near High-Quality Schools

Barrier	Potential Strategy	Explanation
Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Qualified Allocation Plans (QAPs) do not encourage development in opportunity areas	Add a bonus for developments sited near high-performing schools	Some states' QAPs already consider schools. Texas, for example, provides a bonus for developments serving children near or within the attendance zone of a high-performing school.[a] This change could complement forthcoming reforms that encourage development in higher-cost neighborhoods.[b] State QAPs could implement bonuses that identify schools using states' accountability systems under the Every Student Succeeds Act.
Public housing agencies (PHAs) may lack institutional incentives to encourage voucher holders to move to opportunity areas	Encourage voucher programs to promote access to high-performing schools through the Section 8 Management Assessment Program (SEMAP)	SEMAP assesses PHAs' management of the Housing Choice Voucher program. SEMAP matters because it determines whether PHAs qualify for additional HUD funding or administrative flexibility.[c] For PHAs in metropolitan areas, a small amount of their SEMAP score considers whether they have taken affirmative actions to expand housing opportunities, and they also receive a small bonus if a sufficient number of families use their vouchers in low-poverty areas.[d] These portions could be weighted more heavily and also include a measure for families with children who use vouchers near high-performing schools.
Community concerns that affordable housing development may impact schools	Provide education grants linked to new affordable housing	The Massachusetts 40S program provides extra funding for school districts where new affordable housing units are built under the state's smart growth zoning law.[e] These grants help alleviate concerns about new education costs for children who live in those affordable units. Federal education grants could be coupled with project-based vouchers, for example.

[a] Ellen, Ingrid Gould, Keren Horn, Yiwen Kuai, Roman Pazuniak, and Michael David Williams. 2015. *Effect of QAP Incentives on the Location of LIHTC Properties.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research. http://www.huduser.gov/publications/pdf/QAP_incentive_mdrt.pdf.

[b] Properties in Difficult Development Areas (DDAs)—those identified as having higher land and construction costs, which often corresponds to opportunity areas—receive additional tax credits. In the past, DDAs have been designated for entire metropolitan regions, not individual neighborhoods, so only a small number of areas have qualified and the credits have not been limited to the specific high-cost neighborhoods. In 2016, HUD will designate DDAs at the ZIP Code level, creating an incentive for development in many more high-cost neighborhoods. See Sard, Barbara, and Douglas Rice. 2014. *Creating Opportunity for Children: How Housing Location Can Make a Difference.* Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. http://www.cbpp.org/research/creating-opportunity-for-children?fa=view&id=4211#_s1_ednref8.

[c] Sard and Rice (2014).

[d] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. 2015. *SEMAP Indicators Report Guide.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=DOC_11455.pdf.

[e] Rollins, Darcy. 2006. "An Overview of Chapters 40R and 40S: Massachusetts' Newest Housing Policies." *Policy Brief* 06-1. Boston: New England Public Policy Center at the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. https://www.bostonfed.org/economic/neppc/briefs/2006/briefs061.pdf. In New York City, construction of subsidized rental housing has been associated with an increased cost of education at the local schools. See Schwartz, Amy Ellen, and Leanna Stiefel. 2014. "Linking Housing Policy and School Policy." In *Choosing Homes, Choosing Schools*, edited by Annette Lareau and Kimberly Goyette. New York: Russell Sage Foundation: 295–314.

Mobility Strategies To Improve Access to Opportunity Neighborhoods and Schools

Mobility programs can help families access opportunity neighborhoods and schools by moving. This section describes three strategies that mobility programs could implement to increase children's access to opportunity schools: (1) implement a regional program; (2) target opportunity schools, not only opportunity neighborhoods; and (3) provide mobility counseling and other assistance to help families understand both their school and neighborhood options.

In at least 17 communities nationwide, mobility programs help families with housing assistance move to areas of opportunity.[240] Mobility programs employ a range of tools to identify available housing in opportunity areas and help families move, such as mobility counseling and financial incentives for landlords accepting vouchers. Programs often adopt a definition of "opportunity neighborhoods" when designating opportunity areas. Many programs focus on supporting "second-movers," families who already receive housing assistance and are looking to move to an opportunity area.[241]

Although "mobility programs" usually refers to programs using vouchers, communities can also help families make opportunity moves with fixed units, such as scattered-site public housing or privately owned housing. Stephen Norman, Executive Director of the King County Housing Authority (KCHA) in Washington State, notes that fixed units account for about 42 percent of the KCHA households with children living in "high" or "very high" opportunity areas.[242] Montgomery County's natural experiment with socioeconomic school integration similarly used public housing built through inclusionary zoning. The Denver Housing Authority has operated about 1,500 scattered-site public housing units in a range of areas since 1969.[243]

Mobility programs' primary hurdle is helping a significant number of families make moves and stay in their new neighborhoods, while upholding families' ability to choose where they live. The process is costly, and attrition can be high. Of the nearly 2,100 households that signed up for Chicago Regional Housing Choice Initiative's tenant-based mobility program, about 200 ended up moving to opportunity areas over 3 years.[244]

Strategy 1: Promote Regional Mobility Programs

Regional mobility programs are a promising strategy to help families make opportunity moves, including to opportunity schools. These programs establish partnerships between PHAs and other community stakeholders across a region to overcome institutional and logistical barriers. In many regions, voucher availability and opportunity areas are mismatched between PHAs.

Moreover, in some regions, children can only reliably attend low-poverty, higher-performing schools by moving out of their district—as children did through the *Gautreaux* program. In some areas, families may also need to move out of the jurisdiction of the PHA that issued their vouchers. In 2014, a study on 10 low-income neighborhoods found that children were likely to attend a higher-performing school only when they moved to a new school district.[245] Most MTO students who moved to low-poverty areas, for instance, still lived in the same large urban districts[246] and attended schools that were only a bit higher performing and less segregated than the high-poverty, mostly minority, and low-performing schools from which they had moved.[247]

Some regional programs have helped families move to neighborhoods with access to low-poverty, high-performing schools:

- **Baltimore Mobility Program.** Baltimore's program has helped families move to neighborhoods throughout the region, including suburbs outside the city, that meet three criteria: (1) less that 30 percent Black, (2) less than 10 percent poverty, and (3) fewer than 5 percent public housing or project-based assisted units.[248] The program was funded by a legal settlement and benefited from flexibility afforded by the administering entity's status as a Moving to Work agency. 1,800 participating families made moves through 2010.[249] From 2002 to 2010, the children who moved attended schools averaging only 33 percent low-income students compared with 83 percent at their old schools.[250] At their new schools, more than twice as many classes were taught by qualified teachers.[251]

- **Chicago *Gautreaux* program.** The *Gautreaux* program enabled families to move both within the city of Chicago and to suburbs in the region. As noted previously, 88 percent of the participating children who moved to the suburbs attended schools with average ACT scores of 20 or higher compared with only 6 percent of the group who moved to the city.[252]

- **Chicago Regional Housing Choice Initiative.** This program has enabled families to move throughout the Chicagoland area. Children whose families receive mobility counseling and moved experienced major improvements in school performance. On average, children who moved attended schools where far more (36 percentage points) students met or exceed state standards in reading.[253]

Strong partnerships, leadership, and planning are necessary to make the regional programs possible.

Options for Regional Mobility Strategies

Barrier	Potential Strategy	Explanation and Examples
Tenants struggle to use vouchers in opportunity areas outside of their jurisdictions (called "porting")	Regionally administered tenant-based vouchers	In Baltimore, the program's regional administration allowed for families to avoid the complicated process of "porting" vouchers to use them in other jurisdictions.[a] The Chicago Regional Housing Choice Initiative tested both a portability advocate, who facilitated the process for tenants, and centralized administration like Baltimore. In Chicago, centralized administration appeared more effective.[b]
Families struggle to identify willing landlords with affordable housing in opportunity areas	Regional project-based voucher pool	In Chicago, nine public housing agencies (PHAs) pool vouchers through the Regional Housing Initiative and dedicate them to project-based units in opportunity areas. This strategy has supported over 400 affordable apartments in opportunity areas throughout the Chicago region since 2002.[c]
Families with vouchers live outside the jurisdiction of PHAs with project-based units in opportunity areas	Regional waiting list	To speed up referrals to vacant project-based voucher units with vacancies, the Chicago Regional Housing Choice Initiative created a single regional waiting list with families from eight separate PHAs' waiting lists (as opposed to each PHA identifying families from their wait lists individually). Only 35 units, however, were leased in opportunity areas through this waiting list over 3 years.[b] More frequently updating the regional waiting list, improving communication to participants, and tracking referrals systematically could make the strategy more successful.[b]
Limit on project-based units	Federal waivers	PHAs cannot dedicate more than 20 percent of their voucher assistance to project-based units. At a regional level, however, project-based units may enable more opportunity moves while substantially reducing the burden on families to find units. Federal waivers could also enable regional programs to try new methods, such as financial bonuses for landlords in opportunity areas who take voucher tenants.
Starting up a regional program is difficult	Federal technical assistance, evaluation, and support	Regional programs involve startup costs for planning and developing coordinated systems, such as waiting lists or voucher pools. HUD invested $1 million in the Chicago Regional Housing Choice Initiative alongside private foundations and other local funds.[b] Although regional mobility programs are promising, many questions remain about how to most effectively help families move to opportunity areas. Technical assistance can help communities implement and test what works at a regional level, and evaluation will ensure other communities can learn from past programs.

[a] DeLuca, Stefanie, and Peter Rosenblatt. 2011. "Increasing Access to High Performing Schools in an Assisted Housing Voucher Program." In *Finding Common Ground: Coordinating Housing and Education Policy To Promote Integration*, edited by Philip Tegeler. Washington, DC: Poverty & Race Research Action Council: 35–41. http://www.prrac.org/pdf/HousingEducationReport-October2011.pdf.

[b] Housing Choice Partners. 2015. *The Chicago Regional Housing Choice Initiative: Stuck in Place? Maybe Not.* http://www.hcp-chicago.org/2014/program/project-opportunity/.

[c] Metropolitan Planning Council. 2015. "Chicago Regional Voucher Pilot." http://brickllc.com/work_happenings_writeups.html.

Strategy 2: Target Opportunity Schools, Not Only Opportunity Neighborhoods

To help children reach high-quality schools, communities can consider explicitly targeting opportunity schools when they designate opportunity areas. Opportunity schools can complement other indicators for opportunity areas, such as neighborhood characteristics and local crime rates.

Where Are High-Quality Schools Located?

Communities often consider neighborhood poverty when identifying opportunity neighborhoods. Low-poverty neighborhoods, however, do not necessarily provide immediate access to local low-poverty, high-performing schools. According to data from the 2011–12 school year, about 38 percent of neighborhoods were low poverty (10 percent poverty rate or below). Less than one-half, however, of low-poverty neighborhoods—about 16 percent of all neighborhoods—also provided access to low-poverty public elementary schools, on average (some neighborhoods include multiple elementary schools, which are weighted by enrollment).[254] About 28 percent of all neighborhoods were low poverty and included schools ranked in the top half by performance; only 14 percent were low-poverty and had schools in the top fourth by performance.

Many of these low-poverty neighborhoods without low-poverty, high-performing schools are pockets of affluence in high-poverty districts. This finding accords with the evidence that children in distressed neighborhoods are likely to attend a higher-performing school only when they move to a new school district.[255] Some low-income children living in low-poverty neighborhoods may be able to access low-poverty, high-performing schools through school choice programs. As this report discusses, however, in many districts few low-poverty schools are available, and low-income families may struggle to take advantage of choice programs.

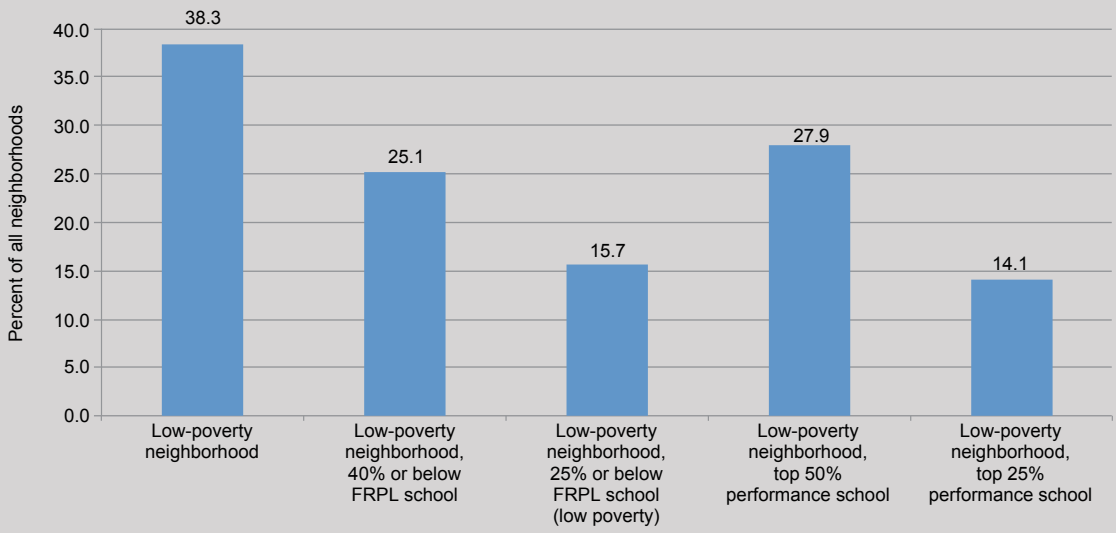
These findings suggest that communities might not assume low-poverty neighborhoods provide access to low-poverty or high-performing schools, and also that communities might benefit by being flexible when designating opportunity areas. Depending on local conditions, communities might lift the

Data and Methodology

The data for the chart "Low-Poverty Neighborhoods and Public Elementary Schools" reflect the 2011–12 school year and were derived from the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing data package, matching census tract poverty rates from the American Community Survey with elementary schools located within the tract. The school performance figures reflect GreatSchools data on fourth-grade students' mean performance on state reading and math exams, ranked from 0 to 100 relative to other elementary schools in the state. The school poverty figures derive from the Common Core of Data school-level free or reduced-price lunch eligibility.

Elementary schools were first matched to census block groups based on school attendance zones from the School Boundary Information System, or SABINS, where available, or if not from the three closest schools in the district within 1.5 miles. The block group-level data were then aggregated to the larger census tract level. If multiple schools are included in the tract, the performance and poverty data are weighted by schools' enrollment.

Low-Poverty Neighborhoods and Public Elementary Schools



FRPL = free or reduced-price lunch.
Source: HUD Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing data set for 2011–12 school year.

threshold for neighborhood poverty above 10 percent to reach more communities with high-quality schools and available rental units, including landlords willing to rent to families with vouchers.

Evidence suggests that neighborhood poverty is related to negative outcomes beginning at about 15 to 20 percent poverty.[256] Recognizing that not all neighborhoods provide all dimensions of opportunity, the Urban Institute suggests that communities might consider neighborhoods with poverty rates below 15 percent as one indicator.[257] In 2008, about 28 percent of rental units below the Fair Market Rent were in census block groups with below 10 percent neighborhood poverty; 31 percent more were in block groups with 10 to 19 percent poverty.[258] For the 2011–12 school year, 57 percent of neighborhoods had poverty rates of 15 percent or below. Raising the neighborhood poverty threshold from 10 to 15 percent increases the number of qualifying neighborhoods with low-poverty schools from 15 to 18 percent and with top-50 percent performance schools from 28 to 37 percent.

Schools and Opportunity Areas to Date

Communities have defined mobility programs' opportunity areas—the neighborhoods where participating families are encouraged or required to move—in many different ways. Communities use both thresholds and indices; that is, some programs have strict limits for areas (for example, over 90 percent graduation rate at the neighborhood's local school), while others combine factors to rate neighborhoods on a single, indexed scale.

Some mobility programs explicitly target schools but do so with different indicators. It makes sense to adapt methods to local needs; districts' student assignment policies vary, aggressive thresholds may rule out nearly all neighborhoods in some communities, and children may have access to other schools through choice programs (such as charter schools or magnet schools).[259]

Examples of Mobility Program Opportunity Areas and Education

Mobility Program	Index or Threshold	Education Element	Other Elements
King County Housing Authority—Community Choice Housing Mobility Program[a]	Opportunity index and targeted thresholds	School reading and math proficiency scores—at least 80 percent grade level reading by third grade School graduation rates Percentage of FRPL-eligible students—under 20 percent Teacher qualifications Teacher-to-student ratio Adult educational attainment	Economic opportunity, housing, and neighborhood indicators
Chicago Regional Housing Choice Initiative[b]	Opportunity index	School reading and math proficiency on state exams	Neighborhood poverty index Job access Labor market engagement Transit access Environmental health hazard exposure levels
Dallas Inclusive Communities Project[c]	Thresholds	Zoned elementary school "met standards" according to the state Zoned high school had a 4-year graduation rate of 90 percent or higher	80 percent or higher Area Median Income No higher than 10 percent poverty rate
San Diego Housing Commission—Choice Communities	Thresholds	Designates ZIP Codes as Choice Communities, based on neighborhood poverty (10 percent or below)—does not directly account for education, but uses neighborhood poverty as a proxy[d]	

[a] Inclusive Communities Toolkit. n.d. "Opportunity Mapping." http://inclusivepolicy.org/policy-program-tools/opportunity-mapping/. See also Berdahl-Baldwin, Audrey. 2015. "Housing Mobility Programs in the U.S." Poverty & Race Research Action Council. http://prrac.org/pdf/HousingMobilityProgramsInTheUS2015.pdf.

[b] Metropolitan Planning Council. 2012. "Promoting Regional Housing Choice Through Public Housing Authority (PHA) Coordination: A Preview of the Chicago Regional Housing Choice Initiative." Presented at the 5th National Conference on Assistance Housing Mobility, Washington, D.C., June 11–12. http://prrac.org/pdf/for_june_12_National_Mobility_Conference.pdf.

[c] Scott, Molly M., Mary Cunningham, Jennifer Biess, Jennifer Lee O'Neil, Philip Tegeler, Ebony Gayles, and Barbara Sard. 2013. *Expanding Choice: Practical Strategies for Building a Successful Housing Mobility Program.* Washington, DC: Urban Institute; Poverty & Race Research Action Council. http://www.prrac.org/pdf/ExpandingChoice.pdf.

[d] San Diego Housing Commission. 2012. "Family Choice Communities." http://www.sdhc.org/uploadedFiles/Rental_Assistance/03.12.12%20Choice_Communities_Families.pdf.

How Communities Can Identify High-Quality Schools for Mobility Programs

Communities can consider explicitly targeting measures of school quality and composition as they target opportunity areas. Doing so could ensure that children who make opportunity moves can enjoy both the benefits of low-poverty, safer neighborhoods and lower-poverty, higher-quality schools that are not racially isolated. Communities' thresholds or indicators should reflect local conditions and ensure that affordable rental housing is actually available in these areas. Also, communities' targeting may vary depending on local school choice programs.

Options To Identify High-Quality Schools

Target	Threshold	Explanation and Examples
School performance	Depends on local conditions and available data; preferably schools identified as narrowing the achievement gap for low-income students through value-added measures	As this report describes, evidence strongly suggests that low-income students benefit by attending higher-performing schools, especially when they also live in higher-quality neighborhoods. Rothwell, for instance, demonstrates that low-income students at the top one-fifth of schools by middle-/high-income student performance scored 2.1 points *above* the state average, while low-income students at the bottom one-fifth of schools scored 18.6 points *below*.[a]
School poverty (free and reduced-price lunch eligibility)	Elementary schools with 25 percent or below poverty; communities may set target as high as 40 percent low-income, depending on local conditions	As this report describes, students tend to perform better at lower-poverty schools. Elementary schools may be most relevant because they are smaller and most closely associated with neighborhoods. The benefits of low-poverty schools are also most evident for young children. The Montgomery County study did not identify a specific threshold for school poverty but suggested around 20 to 35 percent might be a cutoff for benefits compared with students in moderate-poverty schools (up to 65 percent poverty).[b] Also, 25 percent poverty is the cutoff for the U.S. Department of Education's definition of low-poverty schools. Depending on local conditions, communities may choose a higher threshold than 25 percent.[c] Communities might avoid thresholds higher than 40 percent poverty so they do not inadvertently resegregate schools, as evidence suggests a socioeconomic tipping point at 50 percent FRPL-eligible students. Although free and reduced-price lunch eligibility is not a complete indicator of socioeconomic status, it is available nationally. Communities could use other indicators when available, such as mother's educational attainment,[d] or a composite of indicators (for example, family income, parental educational attainment, and parental occupational status).[e]
Racial concentration	Context-sensitive; potentially schools with less than 30 percent minority enrollment	To address racial segregation, communities' mobility programs might avoid targeting schools that are near the tipping point of about 40 percent minority enrollment, depending on local conditions and not considering the race of individual children participating in the mobility program.[f] Evidence suggests a racial tipping point at 40 percent minority enrollment. For reference, the Department of Education defines schools enrolling 50 percent or more minority students as racially isolated.[g]

[a] Rothwell, Jonathan. 2012. *Housing Costs, Zoning, and Access to High-Scoring Schools.* Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution. http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/papers/2012/4/19-school-inequality-rothwell/0419_school_inequality_rothwell.pdf.

[b] Schwartz, Heather. 2012. "Housing Policy Is School Policy: Economically Integrative Housing Promotes Academic Success in Montgomery County, Maryland." In *The Future of School Integration: Socioeconomic Diversity as an Education Reform Strategy*, edited by Richard D. Kahlenberg. New York: The Century Foundation Press: 27–66. Used with permission of the author.

[c] Kahlenberg, Richard D. 2001. *All Together Now: Creating Middle-Class Schools Through Public School Choice.* Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press. Kahlenberg suggests that schools aim to achieve poverty rates of at least 50 percent or below.

[d] Rothstein, Richard. 2013. "Does 'Poverty' Cause Low Achievement?" Economic Policy Institute. http://www.epi.org/blog/poverty-achievement/.

[e] National Center for Education Statistics. 2012. *Improving the Measurement of Socioeconomic Status for the National Assessment of Educational Progress: A Theoretical Foundation.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/researchcenter/Socioeconomic_Factors.pdf.

[f] Federal guidance recommends that communities first consider strategies that do not involve the race of individual students before pursuing individually race-conscious plans. See U.S. Department of Justice; U.S. Department of Education. 2011. *Guidance on the Voluntary Use of Race to Achieve Diversity and Avoid Racial Isolation in Elementary and Secondary Schools.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice; U.S. Department of Education. http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/guidance-ese-201111.pdf.

[g] National Center for Education Statistics. n.d. "Numbers and Types of Public Elementary and Secondary Schools From the Common Core of Data: School Year 2010–11." https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2012/pesschools10/glossary.asp.

As HUD's AFFH guidance provides, communities could prioritize neighborhoods that provide access to high-performing schools.[260] HUD has provided an index of school proficiency with the AFFH tool, and an index adjusted for schools' concentrations of poverty is forthcoming. Communities can also consider local data on school performance, in particular value-added measures—and especially those value-added measures that consider growth among low-income students.[261]

Among neighborhoods providing access to high-performing schools, communities could prioritize those neighborhoods that have schools that are also low poverty. In practice, most high-performing schools in low-poverty neighborhoods are likely also low-poverty schools; enabling low-income students to attend high-performing schools will also promote school integration. In Ohio, for example, the preliminary fiscal year 2015 results showed that schools ranking in the top three-fifths by performance in math and English/language arts averaged below 50 percent students who were "economically disadvantaged" by Ohio's metric of disadvantage; the bottom quintiles for math and English/language arts averaged about 75 percent disadvantaged.[262]

Explicitly considering school poverty in addition to performance could help in a few ways. First, doing so could identify schools likely to perform at a high level *consistently*. One analysis found that, although 16 percent of high-poverty public schools were high performing in a single year, only 1 percent were consistently high performing; low-poverty schools were 22 times as likely as high-poverty schools to consistently perform at a high level.[263] Second, targeting low-poverty schools could help students enjoy the peer benefits of economically diverse schools. Third, communities that consider school poverty can also avoid inadvertently resegregating schools, because they will explicitly aim for schools that are not at risk of "tipping." Tipping points may occur at which higher-income and White families quickly flee schools and neighborhoods.[264] Concerning school integration, the tipping points for race and poverty may be different. Researcher Richard Kahlenberg suggests that the tipping point for the proportion of low-income students is about 50 percent.[265]

Similarly, communities could also target neighborhoods with schools that are not racially isolated. This strategy is important because some socioeconomic integration plans might have only a negligible impact on racial segregation.[266] As this report discusses, racial divides are closely related to but distinct from economic segregation. In the 1970s, a 40-percent enrollment of Black students was commonly considered the tipping point for racial school integration.[267] A 2015 empirical study by sociologist Jeremy Fiel supports that 40-percent threshold as a modern tipping point for minority enrollment.[268]

Strategy 3: Provide Mobility Counseling and Other Assistance To Expand Families' Options for Vouchers

Families need assistance to make opportunity moves and remain in those areas long term. Also, mobility programs can work best when they align with families' preferences, which could mean focusing on schools as a complement to safety. Among families participating in MTO, the top reported reason for wanting to move was getting away from drugs and gangs, followed by seeking larger or higher-quality apartments and better schools.[269] A recent study of housing voucher mobility in Cuyahoga County, Ohio, also found that voucher holders' top priority was low crime rates, followed by housing affordability and school quality.[270]

High-quality mobility counseling—which requires funding—can support many of these strategies. In addition, although counseling is promising, the evidence on specific counseling strategies is limited. HUD could support more research on effective counseling, especially in randomized settings and in the context of both school and housing choices. The federal government could also provide funding for more mobility programs with the intent of improving families' access to high-quality neighborhoods and schools. Margery Austin Turner, Mary Cunningham, and Susan Popkin of the Urban Institute have called for a joint school-focused housing voucher demonstration program to support opportunity moves for families with children.[271]

Options for Mobility Counseling and Assistance

Issue	Potential Strategy	Explanation and Examples
A substantial number of children live in unsafe, disinvested neighborhoods and attend low-quality schools	Federal voucher demonstration program to increase access to high-quality neighborhoods and schools	The demonstration program could include special vouchers with the requirement that they be used to provide families with children with access to safe, high-resourced neighborhoods and to high-quality schools.
Younger children and those living in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods may benefit most from opportunity moves	Reach out to families with younger children and who live in distressed areas	Evidence suggests that young children will be most likely to benefit from opportunity moves. The earlier children move, the longer they can benefit—and the less likely they are to encounter harmful effects from moving at an older age.[a] Children also experience the most dramatic benefits when they move from the most disadvantaged neighborhoods. The children in the Chicago and Baltimore Moving to Opportunity (MTO) sites—which included the most distressed areas—who moved were much more likely to improve their reading skills than children in the other three MTO communities.[b]
Families cannot quickly find units in opportunity neighborhoods near high-quality schools	Increase voucher search time from 60 days to 120 days, if not more	Finding qualified units in opportunity neighborhoods is difficult, and finding neighborhoods that also provide access to high-quality schools is even more so.
Families do not know about opportunity neighborhoods and schools	Provide families with more easily understandable information on opportunity neighborhoods and schools	How people receive information affects their ability to make choices that reflect their values and interests.[c] The federal government and partners could help develop dynamic, easy-to-understand, and concise tools to help both families and mobility counselors identify possible units, neighborhoods, and schools. A number of mobility programs already provide ways for families to see maps of opportunity areas and determine whether addresses qualify. Public housing agencies (PHAs) could provide this information to voucher holders even when the PHA does not operate a formal mobility program. A 2015 HUD rule requires that PHAs must explain the portability process to new voucher holders, explain the advantages of lower-poverty neighborhoods, and "ensure that the list of landlords or other resources covers areas outside of poverty or minority concentration."[d]
Mixed-income communities may be unfamiliar to families	Provide mobility counseling before and after families move	Extensive counseling before and after moving, along with exposure to new neighborhoods and schools, can help families explore new possibilities and reconsider their preferences and options. Counseling might prioritize safety as a starting point, reflecting past mobility participants' expressed interests. Parents who participated in the Baltimore Mobility Program and received counseling subsequently considered school quality and neighborhood diversity much more when considering possible areas to move. The Baltimore program provided particularly robust counseling, including stories of past families who moved, tours of suburban neighborhoods, and home visits after families moved.[e]

Options for Mobility Counseling and Assistance (continued)

Issue	Potential Strategy	Explanation and Examples
Families may be unfamiliar with other school options	Mobility counselors explain school options and differences between schools, and they help families navigate through the school choice process	Mobility counselors could compare prospective schools with the schools that families' children currently attend.[f] This counseling can address families' concerns with transitioning between schools and how new schools can benefit their children. Counselors in Baltimore's regional program were trained to explain school quality in suburban areas and how it compared with residents' original neighborhoods in the city.[e] In areas with school choice programs, counseling could also help families navigate that process in the context of their housing decisions.
Landlords in opportunity areas may have fewer incentives to accept voucher holders	Test strategies to encourage landlord participation in voucher program	Families who seek to move to opportunity areas often struggle to find landlords willing to accept vouchers—it is much easier to identify willing landlords in higher-poverty neighborhoods. Landlords in opportunity areas might have fewer incentives to participate. For instance, in higher-income neighborhoods where more tenants pay rent on time, the voucher program's guarantee of regular payments from the PHA is less enticing. Communities could implement strategies such as insurance programs for unit damage,[g] financial bonuses,[h] and outreach to landlords, including helping landlords fill out the voucher paperwork.

[a] Note that HUD's Office of General Counsel has not yet issued an opinion on whether PHAs may establish a preference for families with children.
[b] Sharkey, Patrick. 2013. *Stuck in Place: Urban Neighborhoods and the End of Progress Toward Racial Equality.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
[c] See, for example, Thaler, Richard H., and Cass R. Sunstein. 2009. *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness.* New York: Penguin Books.
[d] 80 FR 50564. http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2015-08-20/pdf/2015-20551.pdf.
[e] Darrah, Jennifer, and Stefanie DeLuca. 2014. "'Living Here Has Changed My Whole Perspective': How Escaping Inner-City Poverty Shapes Neighborhood and Housing Choice," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 33 (2): 350–384.
[f] DeLuca, Stefanie, and Peter Rosenblatt. 2011. "Increasing Access to High Performing Schools in an Assisted Housing Voucher Program." In *Finding Common Ground: Coordinating Housing and Education Policy To Promote Integration*, edited by Philip Tegeler. Washington, DC: Poverty & Race Research Action Council: 35–41. http://www.prrac.org/pdf/HousingEducationReport-October2011.pdf.
[g] Oregon has developed a Landlord Guarantee Assistance Program. Oregon Housing and Community Services. n.d. "Housing Choice Vouchers: Landlord Guarantee Assistance." http://www.oregon.gov/ohcs/Pages/housing-choice-landlord-guarantee-assistance.aspx.
[h] The Inclusive Communities Project in Dallas, Texas, offers an initial financial bonus for landlords who agree to lease to a voucher holder. Inclusive Communities Toolkit. n.d. "Landlord Bonuses (Dallas)." http://inclusivepolicy.org/case-studies/landlord-bonuses-dallas/.

Conclusion

Housing policy can help children access neighborhoods and schools that promote their long-term success, both where they already live and attend school as well as through opportunity moves. For the federal government, the existing tools could produce significant change. About 1 million households with children have vouchers, for example.[272] Coordination is essential: more integrated planning and partnerships at all levels can ensure that housing and school policies work together to support children's development in the short and long term. Moreover, the strategies described in this report can complement broader initiatives to expand opportunity, such as expanding the availability of housing assistance.

Housing policy can enable children and families to experience major, positive changes. Families can learn of new possibilities and make informed choices about where to live and go to school; they also can stay in and benefit from transitioning neighborhoods. Housing strategies that consider education can foster higher-quality, more integrated neighborhoods and schools, promoting a more inclusive and capable nation.

[1] See Kahlenberg, Richard D. 2014. "Why Economic School Segregation Matters." New York: New York University Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy. http://furmancenter.org/research/iri/kahlenberg.

[2] See Mickelson, Roslyn Arlin. n.d. "School Integration and K-12 Educational Outcomes: A Quick Synthesis of Social Science Evidence." *Research Brief No. 5.* Washington, DC: The National Coalition on School Diversity. http://www.prrac.org/pdf/DiversityResearchBriefNo5.pdf.

[3] Wells, Amy Stuart, Lauren Fox, and Diana Cordova-Cobo. 2016. *How Racially Diverse Schools and Classrooms Can Benefit All Students.* New York: The Century Foundation. http://apps.tcf.org/how-racially-diverse-schools-and-classrooms-can-benefit-all-students. The report discusses both racial and socioeconomic integration.

[4] Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. 2015. "Policy Basics: Federal Rental Assistance." Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. http://www.cbpp.org/research/housing/policy-basics-federal-rental-assistance.

[5] U.S. Census Bureau. n.d.a. "Geographic Terms and Concepts—Census Tract." Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau. https://www.census.gov/geo/reference/gtc/gtc_ct.html.

[6] See U.S. Census Bureau. n.d.b. "How the Census Bureau Measures Poverty." Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau. https://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/about/overview/measure.html. See also U.S. Census Bureau. 1995. "Poverty Areas." Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau. https://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/statbriefs/povarea.html.

[7] See, for example, National Center for Education Statistics. 2015a. "Concentration of Public School Students Eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch." Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_clb.asp.

[8] See National Center for Education Statistics. 2012. *Improving the Measurement of Socioeconomic Status for the National Assessment of Educational Progress: A Theoretical Foundation.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/researchcenter/Socioeconomic_Factors.pdf.

[9] National Center for Education Statistics. 2010a. "2010 Spotlight: High-Poverty Public Schools." Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/analysis/2010-index.asp. A 2010 law that changed schools' certification process for free and reduced-price lunches (FRPL) may affect the quality of FRPL data, although the effect may be small and is less likely to affect "low-poverty" schools. See Sard, Barbara, and Douglas Rice. 2014. *Creating Opportunity for Children: How Housing Location Can Make a Difference.* Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. http://www.cbpp.org/research/creating-opportunity-for-children?fa=view&id=4211#_s1_ednref8.

[10] Southern Education Foundation. 2015. *A New Majority: Low Income Students Now a Majority in the Nation's Public Schools.* Atlanta: Southern Education Foundation. http://www.southerneducation.org/getattachment/4ac62e27-5260-47a5-9d02-14896ec3a531/A-New-Majority-2015-Update-Low-Income-Students-Now.aspx. Interpreting data from the National Center for Education Statistics.

[11] Urban Institute. 2015. "A Closer Look at Income and Race Concentration in Public Schools." Washington, DC: Urban Institute. http://www.urban.org/features/closer-look-income-and-race-concentration-public-schools. Citing data from National Center for Education Statistics (2010a).

[12] See Snyder, Tom, and Lauren Musu-Gillette. 2015. "Free or Reduced-Price Lunch: A Proxy for Poverty?" Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. http://nces.ed.gov/blogs/nces/post/free-or-reduced-price-lunch-a-proxy-for-poverty. Some higher-poverty schools can now choose the Community Eligibility Option, which allows for schools to certify for FRPL if at least 40 percent of their students are directly certified as eligible. The number of meal claims is calculated as 1.6 times the number of directly certified students. As a result, this option could slightly overestimate the number of FRPL-eligible students at relatively high-poverty schools. See Hoffman, Lee. 2012. *Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Eligibility Data in ED*Facts*: A White Paper on Current Status and Potential Changes.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development. http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/edfacts/free-lunch-white-paper.doc.

[13] See U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. 2015. "Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) Data Documentation." https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/AFFH-Data-Documentation.pdf.

[14] Coleman, James S., Ernest Q. Campbell, Carol J. Hobson, James McPartland, Alexander M. Mood, Frederic D. Weinfeld, and Robert L. York. 1966. *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (commonly referred to as the "Coleman Report"). Report prepared for the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office. http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED012275.pdf.

[15] Rumberger, Russell W., and Gregory J. Palardy. 2005. "Does Segregation Still Matter? The Impact of Student Composition on Academic Achievement in High School," *Teachers College Record* 107 (9): 1999–2045. The study holds a number of other relevant factors, such as family structure, constant.

[16] Palardy, Gregory J. 2013. "High School Socioeconomic Segregation and Student Attainment," *American Educational Research Journal* 50 (4): 714–754.

[17] Schwartz, Heather. 2012. "Housing Policy Is School Policy: Economically Integrative Housing Promotes Academic Success in Montgomery County, Maryland." In *The Future of School Integration: Socioeconomic Diversity as an Education Reform Strategy*, edited by Richard D. Kahlenberg. New York: The Century Foundation Press: 27–66. The study included about 850 children who lived in the county's public housing, attended the district's elementary schools for at least 2 years from 2001 to 2007, had at least one test score available, and did not qualify for special education services of more than 14 hours per week. The students' families were very poor relative to the overall population of Montgomery County, with average family incomes of about $21,000—although that figure is much higher than the national average for families in public housing. Of the families, 72 percent were Black and 87 percent were headed by women.

[18] Schwartz (2012).

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Nine-tenths of the public housing students lived in neighborhoods with poverty rates of less than 10 percent, and only 10 of the 550 neighborhoods had poverty rates of more than 20 percent. Schwartz found a small difference in outcomes between students who lived in very low-poverty neighborhoods (under 5 percent poverty rate) and low-poverty neighborhoods (5 to 10 percent poverty rate), about one-half the size of the school poverty effect.

[25] Schwartz (2012).

[26] Duncan, Greg J., and Anita Zuberi. 2006. "Mobility Lessons From Gautreaux and Moving to Opportunity," *Northwestern Journal of Law and Social Policy* 1 (1): 110–126.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Rosenbaum, James, and Stefanie DeLuca. 2008. "What Kinds of Neighborhoods Change Lives? The Chicago *Gautreaux* Housing Program and Recent Mobility Programs," *Indiana Law Review* 41 (3): 653–662.

[29] Rosenbaum, James E. 1995. "Examining the Geography of Opportunity by Expanding Residential Choice: Lessons From the Gautreaux Program." *Housing Policy Debate* 6 (1): 231–269.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Duncan and Zuberi (2006).

[33] Dynarski, Mark, and Kirsten Kainz. 2015. "Why Federal Spending on Disadvantaged Students (Title I) Doesn't Work." *Evidence Speaks*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution. http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2015/11/20-title-i-spending-disadvantaged-students-dynarski-kainz. See The Nation's Report Card. 2015. "Lower Mathematics Scores for White Fourth-Grade Students Compared to 2013." http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2015/#mathematics/groups?grade=4.

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