

GUIDANCE FOR REAL ESTATE AGENTS: HOW (AND WHY) TO PROMOTE SCHOOL DIVERSITY

During the homebuying process, comments from real estate agents about the perceived quality of schools can racially steer buyers toward or away from a community. Because there is often a correlation between the perceived quality of schools and neighborhood economic and racial composition, comments from real estate agents about a school or school district can deter homebuyers from looking in diverse neighborhoods and racially steer homebuyers in violation of fair housing laws.

It is valuable for an entire community that real estate agents discuss the benefits of racial and ethnic school diversity to all homebuyers. With a more holistic understanding of school quality, real estate agents can harness school promotion as a tool of integration rather than segregation.

RACIAL STEERING:

includes words, phrases, or actions that direct equivalent homebuyers to different areas based on their race in a way that perpetuates segregation patterns.

Steering violates the Fair Housing Act.

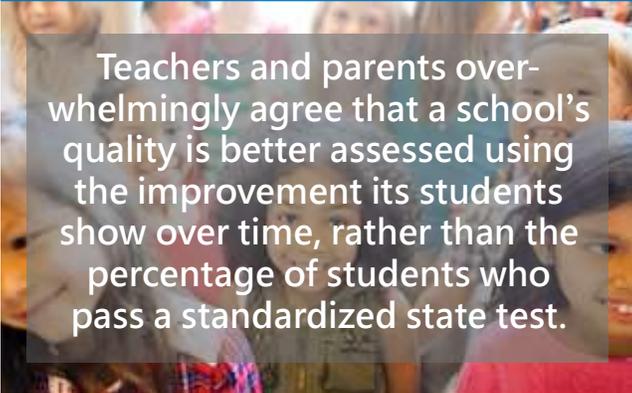
Highlighting the perceived quality of school districts based on test score ratings can racially steer buyers. The perceived quality of a school is often garnered from school ratings that are based on factors like test scores, which are heavily influenced by race and class. Commenting on the perceived quality of a school may act as a proxy for expressing the economic and racial composition of a community.

TEST SCORES:

Standardized test scores continue to drive the conversation about school quality even though they do not provide an accurate view of school quality. Test scores can actually be correlated with low levels of student engagement and “out-of-school factors” like individual and family background characteristics rather than the quality of school instruction.

Scores and ratings that rely heavily on test scores do not provide information on the things that parents really care about, like school culture, student social and emotional health, and development of critical thinking skills.

GUIDELINES FOR INCLUSIVE PRACTICES:



Teachers and parents overwhelmingly agree that a school's quality is better assessed using the improvement its students show over time, rather than the percentage of students who pass a standardized state test.

- Discuss the benefits of school diversity.
- Caution homebuyers against relying on school ratings based on test scores when assessing school quality.
- Give the same information to all families.
- Learn about diverse schools in your community—consider visiting the schools. (See the Pasadena video.)
- Be aware of your own implicit biases. (See the Perception Institute video.)
- Include positive information about a school district that may not be reflected in traditional measures of perceived school quality or direct the buyer to sources that provide more information.