

How (and Why) to Promote School Diversity

PRRAC
*Poverty & Race
Research Action Council*

 **NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF
REALTORS®**

Overview

- Racial steering is illegal and bad for the community.
- Selectively talking about schools may illegally steer homebuyers.
- The perceived quality of schools often does not show the whole picture.
- Talking about schools holistically can promote school diversity.
- **Why it matters:**
 - **Parents often care about more than is represented by perceived school quality.**
 - **Integrated schools are good for the entire community.**

Racial Steering

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

- Promoting homes mainly in white communities for white buyers and homes mainly in predominantly minority areas for buyers of color
- Showing homes for sale in white neighborhoods to white buyers but not otherwise-equivalent buyers of color
- Leading buyers to believe there are no suitable homes within the desired price range available elsewhere in the general area
- Making comments, **truthful or not**, about school districts or otherwise, that are made with the intent to steer families to homes in neighborhoods or school zones where their racial or ethnic group predominates.



Effects of Racial Steering

Racial steering leads to segregated neighborhoods and segregated schools.

Effects of segregation include:

- concentration of poverty and disinvestment in particular neighborhoods
- economic consequences flowing to the entire community
- decreased housing prices in predominantly Black and Latino communities
- increased housing prices in areas with perceived “better” schools



Perpetuation of Inequity

Steering buyers **away** from a community:

- ➔ less buyers → decreased demand → lower housing prices → lower property values → less property tax revenue → less funding for schools → lower home prices

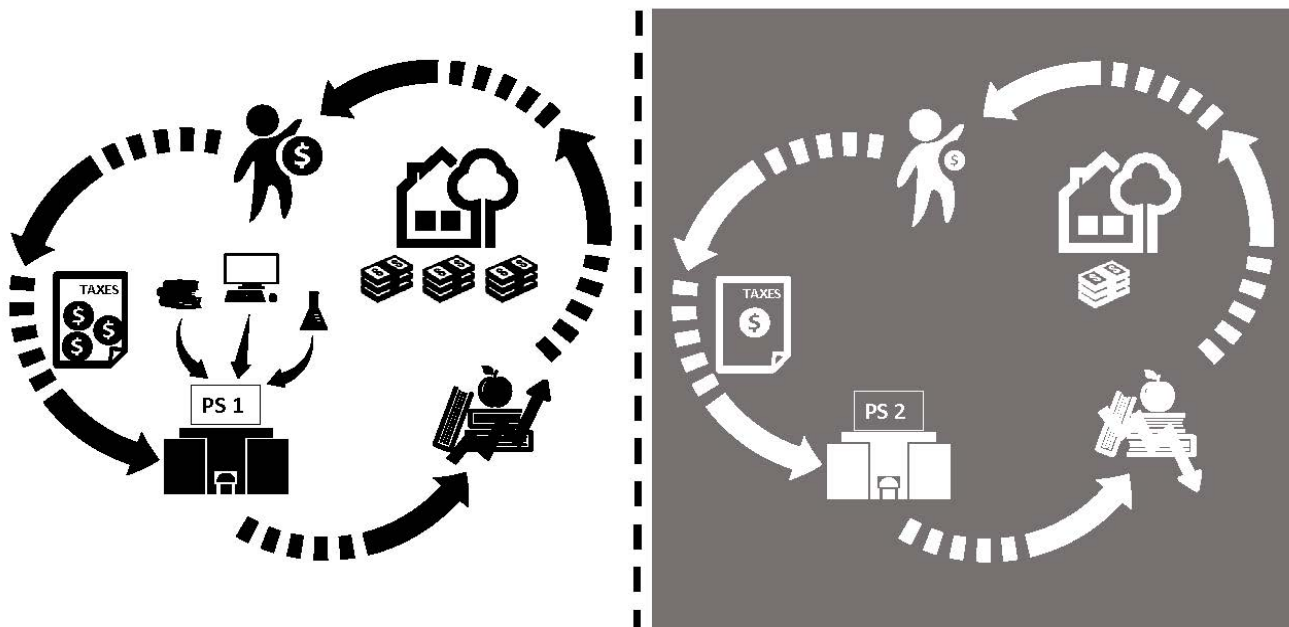
Steering buyers **toward** a community:

- ➔ more buyers → increased demand → higher housing prices → more property tax revenue → more funding for schools → higher housing prices



Perpetuation of Inequity

Perpetuating effects of school boundary lines and income segregation



Steering Using Perceived School Quality

- Commenting on the perceived quality of schools* to some buyers but not others can racially steer homebuyers and perpetuate segregation patterns.
- Comments about school districts often act as proxy for the economic and racial or ethnic composition of a neighborhood.

*perceived quality of schools: perception of schools based on school ratings calculated using quantifiable factors like standardized test scores



Example:

Commenting negatively on diverse schools to white buyers steers these buyers into white neighborhoods. . .

- Saying that a predominantly minority community is **an area to avoid “school district-wise”**
- Pre-judging a school district for a buyer: **“You’re not going to like those schools”**
- “There’s one school district that **you’ll stay away from.**”
- **Avoiding promotion** of certain school districts to white buyers

. . . while at the same time refusing to provide the same information to buyers of color, or making positive comments about the same districts to buyers of color, steers these buyers into predominantly minority neighborhoods.

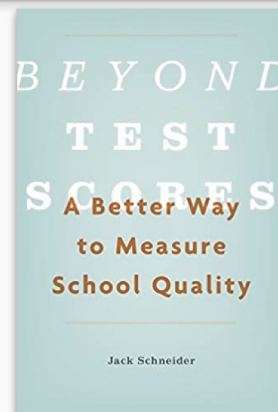


Common Misperceptions about School Quality + the Result

- Families often rely on test scores as a proxy for school quality, but test scores do not accurately reflect school quality
- Test scores are actually largely indicative of student demographics.
 - E.g., higher-quality schools with better proportion of low-income and high-income students and students of color tend to score higher on standardized tests due to access to resources and other socioeconomic impacts.
 - Further, relying on test scores to assess school quality leads to **negative results**:
 - More affluent families avoid schools with lower test scores, further solidifying and reinforcing the cycle of 1) lower performance on standardized tests, and 2) continued avoidance of those schools, 3) exclusionary housing costs, 4) increased segregation.

The Truth About Schools

- In *Beyond Test Scores: A Better Way to Measure School Quality*, Jack Schneider lays out a comprehensive framework for assessing educational effectiveness.
- Polling of teachers and parents helps shed light on the range of factors that can and should be assessed to indicate school quality. For example:
 - A 2017 poll shows that parents want to know if students feel safe and cared for, are being challenged, have opportunities to play and create, and are happy.
 - A 2019 poll shows that 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."

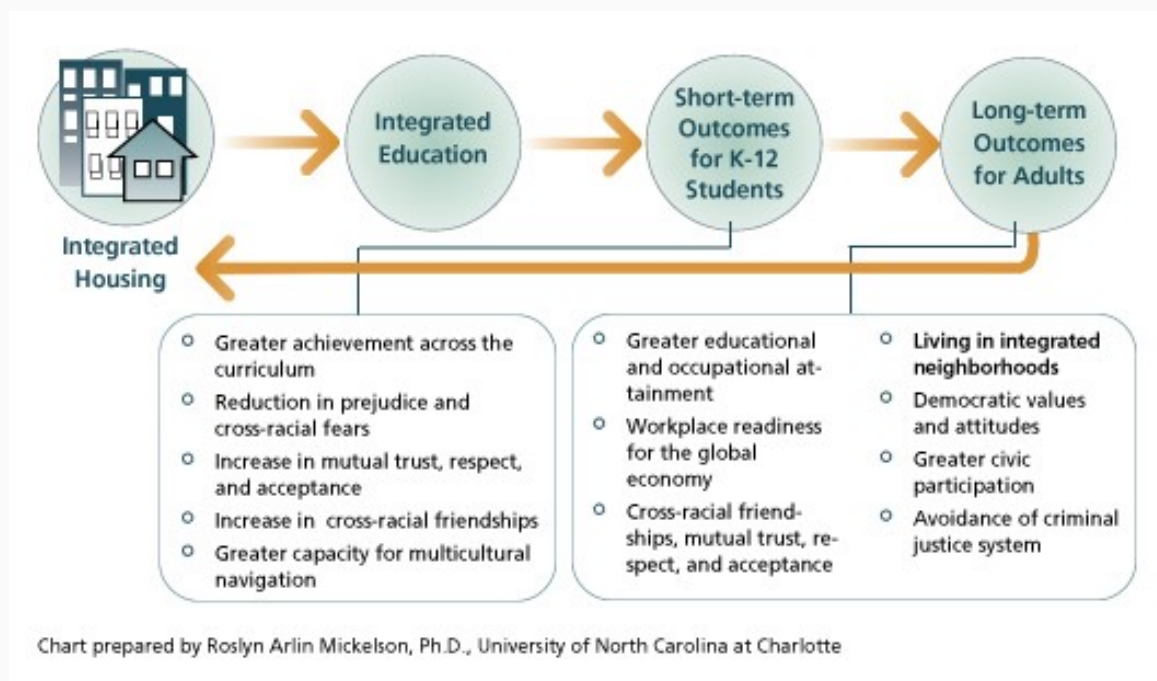


Author, Jack
Schneider



Benefits of School Diversity

In addition to relying on incomplete information about schools, families often do not consider or know about the benefits of sending their kids to racially and socioeconomically diverse schools.



How to Talk About Schools

Following these suggestions will help real estate agents uphold their fair housing obligations and help protect from potential lawsuits.

DO:

- Do supplement existing information (e.g., test score data) with more comprehensive information about schools
- Do communicate about schools to all families equally
 - E.g., do not only discuss the benefits of diversity with families of certain racial groups or socioeconomic status.
- Do share aspects of school quality that parents value
- Do actively warn against the limitations of relying on test scores or similar school rankings to assess school quality
- Encourage families to look deeper into GreatSchools data



Encourage parents to dig deeper into a school's characteristics on GreatSchools.com. Don't settle for the overall rating -- parents may want to know different things based on a child's specific needs.

8/10

New! ?

GREATSCHOOLS RATING

REVIEWS
29 ★★★★★

GRADES
K-5

STUDENTS
482

TYPE
Public

This school is **rated above average** in school quality compared to other schools in Missouri. Students here perform **above average** on state tests, are making about **average** year-over-year academic improvement, and this school has about **average** results in how well it's serving disadvantaged students.

ACADEMICS ?

EQUITY ?

ENVIRONMENT ?

Test scores

9/10 >

Equity overview

6/10 >

Student demographics

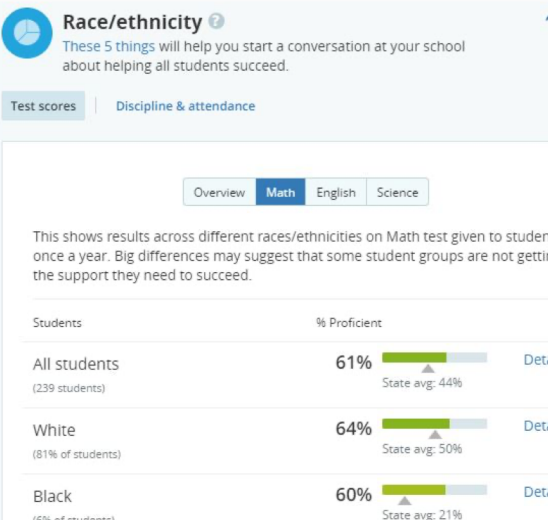
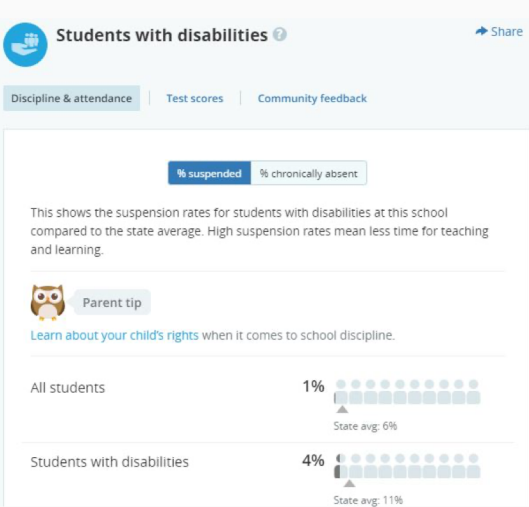
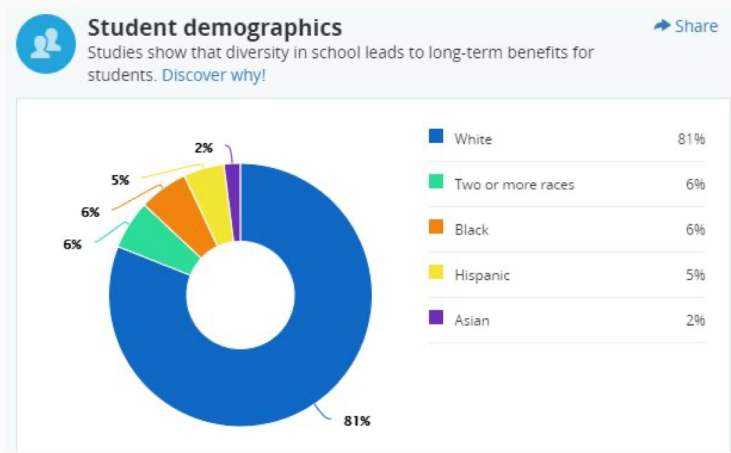
Academic progress

6/10 >

Race/ethnicity

>

Discipline & attendance



How to Talk About Schools

DON'T:

- Do not withhold information
- Do not vary comments about schools based on a family's race/ethnicity or income*
- After providing comprehensive information, do not deter or otherwise interfere in the decision making process

*It may be legally permissible to affirmatively market schools to different racial groups to promote integration as part of a concerted fair housing policy; however, we do not recommend such a standard practice in the absence of such a policy.



Pasadena Model: Get to Know the Diverse Schools in Your Area and Promote Them to All Families

- Local real estate agents historically held negative but inaccurate perceptions about the Pasadena Unified School District (PUSD), and actively discouraged new residents from considering PUSD schools.
- To address this “perception gap,” Pasadena Educational Foundation sponsored an innovative real estate agent outreach program to help educate agents about PUSD schools
- The initiative seeks to help agents see the public schools as they really are, provide current information about schools to all families, and encourage realtors to be active ambassadors for the school district.
- The results have been positive - the program has helped change the narrative around public schools in the district.



Lisa Achworth, Realtor at Pacific Union International, reading to students at Longfellow Elementary as part of Realtors Read Across PASadena on Dr. Seuss Read Across America Day.

Sources

- Slide 4: *Gladstone, Realtors v. Village of Bellwood*, 441 U.S. 91, 94 (1979); Ann Owens, *Racial Residential Segregation of School-Age Children and Adults: The Role of Schooling as a Segregating Force*, 3 RUSSELL SAGE FOUND. J. SOC. SCI. 63, 67 (2017); Emily Badger, *Why Segregation Is Bad for Everyone*, CITYLAB (May 3, 2013), <https://www.citylab.com/life/2013/05/why-segregation-bad-everyone/5476/>; *Why Segregation Is Bad for Everyone*, PREVENTION INST. (May 3, 2013), <https://www.preventioninstitute.org/unity/reports-from-the-field/1026-why-segregation-is-bad-for-everyone-atlantic-cities-532013>.
- Slide 8: Olivia Winslow, *Long Island Divided: Schools as a Selling Point*, NEWSDAY (Nov. 17, 2019), <https://projects.newsday.com/long-island/schools-real-estate-segregation/>.
- Slide 10: Dan D. Goldhaber et al., *A Three-way Error Components Analysis of Educational Productivity*, 7 EDUC. ECON. J. 199, 206 (1999); HART RESEARCH ASSOCIATES, PUBLIC SCHOOL PARENTS ON THE VALUE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION 1 (2017), *available at* https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/parentpoll2017_memo.pdf; *How Do You Assess School Quality?*, PDK POLL (2019), <https://pdkpoll.org/results/assess-school-quality-public-schools-pdk-poll>.
- Slide 12: GreatSchools, <https://www.greatschools.org/gk/finding-the-data/>
- Slide 14: Jennifer Miyake-Trapp, *Changing the Perception of Pasadena Unified School District Through an Innovative Realtor Outreach Program*.

For more information, visit www.school-diversity.org