

LINKING HOUSING AND SCHOOL INTEGRATION POLICY: WHAT FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS CAN DO

In spite of the obvious “reciprocal relationship” between housing and school policy,¹ government housing and education agencies have rarely collaborated to promote the common goals of racial and economic integration. Recent efforts to promote collaboration among housing and school agencies have focused on place-based interventions to enhance the learning environment for low income children in segregated, high poverty schools and neighborhoods. These are important initiatives, but working together, government housing and education planners can do more to address the underlying conditions of segregation and poverty concentration that are a major contributor to unequal neighborhood and school conditions.

Housing and school integration can have a strong mutually reinforcing effect – research indicates that children who attend economically and racially integrated schools have improved achievement and long term education outcomes, and are more likely to grow up and live in integrated communities and neighborhoods, and send their own children to integrated schools.²

1. Encouraging collaboration between state housing and education departments to promote housing and school integration

The Department of Education and HUD can issue joint guidance to encourage collaboration between state education departments and state housing agencies to mutually support the recognized national goals of housing integration and school integration. This could be similar to joint guidance on school diversity the Department of Education released along with the Attorney General in 2011,³ which listed both general goals and policies and specific ideas for implementation. The joint guidance might include:

- a) standards for development of state guidelines on siting of new assisted housing units, taking into account the impact on school demographics of adding additional low income children to an existing school zone, and the need for greater access for low income children to low poverty, high performing schools;

¹ *Keyes v. School District No. 1*, 413 U.S. 189 (1973)

² See Roslyn Arlin Mickelson, “Exploring the School-Housing Nexus: A Synthesis of Social Science Evidence,” in *Finding Common Ground: Coordinating Housing and Education Policy to Promote Integration* (PRRAC and the National Coalition on School Diversity, October 2011)

³ <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/guidance-ese-201111.pdf>

- b) standards for development of state guidelines and conditions on approval of local school construction proposals, to promote reduction of racial isolation and poverty concentration, taking into account location of existing and planned affordable housing developments;
- c) development of state review authority over local school boundary-drawing in light of regional demographics and affordable housing location (cf Minnesota);
- d) promotion of magnet school models and interdistrict transfers for students in state turnaround school interventions (cf NY State turnaround schools program), combined with state housing intervention to promote homeownership and economic development in the neighborhood of the school (CDBG, HOME, etc)
- e) models for states to promote and incentivize interdistrict school collaboration and public housing agency regional consortium agreements among towns to assist in balancing school enrollments.
- f) incorporation of school quality and poverty rates in state Qualified Allocation Plans for the Low Income Housing Tax Credit.

2. Incorporating school integration into ongoing regional planning efforts

HUD’s forthcoming fair housing rule: HUD’s proposed “Assessment Tool” for the forthcoming Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule requires state and local jurisdictions to consider the effects of housing decisions on local schools in their five year “consolidated planning” process.⁴ This requirement will be valuable for states and counties that use the AFFH tool, and the Department of Education should encourage states and local school districts to engage in this planning process with their corresponding housing agencies.

HUD’s Sustainable Communities Initiative: HUD’s regional “Sustainable Communities Initiative” (recently renamed the “Office of Economic Resilience”) – undertaken in collaboration with the Department of Transportation and EPA, has engaged selected metropolitan areas and their housing and transportation authorities in a regional planning exercise coordinated by the metropolitan planning agency, but the initiative did not include local education agencies. If this program is revived, education should be included, and the Department of Education should be made a partner federal agency.

3. Siting of new assisted housing in low poverty, high performing school districts

States should incorporate school performance data and school poverty rates as siting criteria for new low income housing developments in their state Low Income Housing Tax Credit annual “Qualified Allocation Plans” (Massachusetts)

⁴ Proposed Rule on Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing, 78 Fed. Reg. 43710-43743 (July 19, 2013)

Project based Section 8: Use state and local bonding authority to acquire small multifamily developments and 2-3 family houses in high performing school zones; use PHA project based vouchers to help finance and make room for low income families in these developments (King County, WA)

Inclusionary zoning and scattered site public housing: housing agencies in Montgomery County, Maryland (using inclusionary zoning authority along with public housing subsidies)⁵ and Denver, Colorado (using standard public housing subsidies)⁶ have placed scattered site public housing in high performing school zones, with very positive effects for residents and children. Inclusionary zoning programs in New Jersey have shown similar success in connecting children to better schools.⁷

4. Linking housing and school integration in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program

We have seen great results in jurisdictions where Housing Choice Vouchers are specifically targeted to help families with children access lower poverty, high performing schools (e.g. Baltimore, Dallas, King County).⁸ Some of the best practices exemplified by these programs include incorporating waitlist preference for families with young children (Baltimore, King County); incorporating discussion of school quality into initial tenant briefings and annual recertification meetings and materials (Dallas, Baltimore)⁹; inclusion of school quality information in tenant information packets (HUD suggested that PHAs include a link to Great Schools website in a 2010 guidance, but few PHAs have followed up in the absence of stronger requirements); housing mobility program working with receiving school districts to ensure welcoming and successful school environment for low income families moving into district (Dallas); and post-move counseling with families to encourage school retention (Baltimore).¹⁰

⁵ See Heather Schwartz, “Housing Policy Is School Policy – Recent Research in Montgomery County,” in *Finding Common Ground: Coordinating Housing and Education Policy to Promote Integration* (PRRAC and the National Coalition on School Diversity, October 2011).

⁶ See Anna Maria Santiago et al., U.S. Dep’t of Hous. & Urban Dev., Ofc. of Policy Dev. & Res., *Opportunity Neighborhoods for Latino and African American Children* 191-97 (Mar. 2014), available at http://www.huduser.org/portal/Publications/pdf/Opportunity_Neighborhoods.pdf. See also IN PURSUIT OF A DREAM DEFERRED: LINKING HOUSING & EDUCATION POLICY 144 (John A. Powell, Gavin Kearney & Vina Kay eds., Peter Lang Publ’g 2001). (Describing the use of scattered site housing in Denver, Colorado, encourage the development of integrated schools and communities.)

⁷ See Douglas S. Massey et al., *Climbing Mount Laurel: The Struggle for Affordable Housing and Social Mobility in an American Suburb* 125-26, 133-34, 145, 148 (2013).

⁸ For best practices in housing mobility programs, see generally Molly Scott et al, *Expanding Choice: Practical Strategies for Building a Successful Housing Mobility Program* (Urban Institute and PRRAC, 2013), www.prrac.org/pdf/ExpandingChoice.pdf.

⁹ PRRAC and the ACLU of Maryland developed a tenant and staff briefing packet for counselors in the Baltimore program – materials available at www.housingmobility.org.

¹⁰ See also IN PURSUIT OF A DREAM DEFERRED: LINKING HOUSING & EDUCATION POLICY 59 (John A. Powell, Gavin Kearney & Vina Kay eds., Peter Lang Publ’g 2001) (describing a housing counseling plan in Louisville, Kentucky, where counselors took black recipients of rental subsidies outside the ghetto through housing and education options available in primarily white areas, and where families making pro-

Although HUD has also encouraged PHAs to use the Great Schools website in tenant briefings, substantially more can be done to expand education-focused voucher mobility programs in other communities. We recommend creation of a new interagency initiative, coordination with “MTW” office at HUD (which works with a group of strong public housing agencies that have been given unique flexibility and freedom from HUD regulatory constraints), incorporation of voucher targeting in selected MTW extension agreements, and delegation of agency staff to work with housing and education agencies in the selected regions.

5. Building school integration into existing HUD-Department of Education collaborations on Choice Neighborhoods and Promise Neighborhoods

The positive interagency collaboration that has developed in the context of Choice Neighborhoods, Promise Neighborhoods, and Promise Zones can be expanded to place more emphasis on the agencies’ policy goals to reduce racial and economic concentration in schools and neighborhoods. Future CNI funding rounds can explicitly incorporate these goals as rating criteria, and also place more emphasis on off site replacement housing and housing mobility counseling. School redesigns can incorporate proven interdistrict magnet school approaches to give low income students access to a less poverty concentrated learning environment – similar to NOFAs recently issued by New York State.¹¹

Additional Resources

IN PURSUIT OF A DREAM DEFERRED: LINKING HOUSING & EDUCATION POLICY 59 (John A. Powell, Gavin Kearney & Vina Kay eds., Peter Lang Publ'g 2001).

Toward a Strategy For Urban Integration: Lessons in School and Housing Policy From Twelve Cities, Gary Orfield (1980)

Elizabeth DeBray-Pelot & Erica Frankenberg, *Federal Legislation to Promote Metropolitan Approaches to Educational and Housing Opportunity*, 17 Geo. J. Poverty Law & Pol’y 265 (2010).

integrative moves were exempt from mandatory busing, resulting in 50% of subsidy recipients moving to white areas.)

¹¹ See www.nysed.gov/Press/NYS-Schools-to-Receive-Grants-to-Promote-Socioeconomic-Integration; see also http://school-diversity.org/pdf/NCSD_SIG_Proposal_withcoverletter_10-31-14.pdf.