

## SOCIAL SCIENCE FINDINGS ABOUT SCHOOL INTEGRATION

### ■ Racially integrated student bodies are essential for K-12 schools to further their mission to prepare children to be global citizens in our increasingly diverse society.

- School districts that adopt voluntary integration plans seek to obtain the numerous benefits of racially integrated schools and avoid the harms associated with racial isolation—all of which further the vital role of schools in our society.
- Race-conscious plans that seek to maintain racially integrated schools benefit all students and do not disadvantage any group because all students would be guaranteed admission to a school. In contrast to institutions of higher education, admission to most K-12 schools is not based on any particular kind of merit.
- Americans of all races and ethnicities substantially support the idea of racially integrated schools. Public opinion polls show widespread support for the ideal of integration. The majority of parents whose children have attended integrated schools believe that integrated schools have improved the quality of their child's education. Teachers also believe that integrated classrooms provide unique educational benefits that cannot be attained in single-race classrooms.

### ■ Racially integrated schools promote social cohesion and reduce prejudice.

- Racially integrated schools promote cross-racial understanding in ways that are not possible in segregated school environments. Students in racially integrated schools are also more likely to have friendships with individuals from other

racies and are more willing to live and work in integrated settings than those in segregated schools.

- Students in racially diverse schools are less likely to develop racial stereotypes or prejudice than students who are not in daily contact with people of other races. Well-established techniques for structuring racially diverse schools have proven to improve the academic and social outcomes for all students in desegregated settings.
- Metro areas with completely integrated schools have experienced declining residential segregation.

### ■ Racially integrated schools enhance students' learning, expand their future opportunities, and benefit society at large.

- Research suggests that the critical thinking skills of all students improve in racially integrated classrooms. Diverse learning opportunities make all students better problem solvers and communicators.
- The academic achievement of black and Latino students is generally higher in desegregated schools compared with black and Latino students in segregated minority schools.
- Integrated school environments do not harm the test scores of white students. In fact, white students who grow up in racially segregated neighborhoods are likely to benefit from integrated school environments as they gain the opportunity to understand and value multiple perspectives and emerge from school better prepared for living and working in our increasingly diverse American society.

- Minority students who attend integrated schools are connected to higher-status social networks, which improve their chances of attending more selective colleges and getting higher-status jobs.
- Because students who are products of integrated schools tend to enjoy higher rates of high school graduation and college attendance, racially diverse schools lead to a more educated workforce.

■ **As the Supreme Court recognized in *Brown v. Board of Education*, racially segregated minority schools are unequal. The racial segregation of students in schools is increasing and the stakes for our society to provide an equal education to all children are higher than ever in light of the demographic changes in our society.**

- Historically, the vast majority of segregated minority schools have been plagued by a lack of resources that are essential to a learning environment. Segregated minority schools generally have fewer qualified and experienced teachers, higher teacher turnover rates, larger class size, fewer advanced classes, inferior infrastructure, and fewer basic educational supplies.
- Racially integrated schools provide exposure to middle-class, college-going peer groups that minority students may not otherwise obtain in schools of concentrated poverty. For non-native English speakers, integrated schools can also provide important exposure to native English speakers.
- Very few high-poverty, segregated minority high schools have graduation rates of more than half the students they enroll in the ninth grade. Of those students who do graduate, few are prepared for college, diminishing their future opportunities and contributions to society.

■ **Years of experience and social science research show that schools cannot achieve racial integration without making it an explicit goal through policies that consider race. School districts that have not been able to implement race-conscious policies have not achieved the racial integration necessary to obtain the short-term and long-term benefits of integrated education.**

- Colorblind approaches generally work to the disadvantage of minority groups. Because we live in a society with deep residential segregation, choice plans that are not racially conscious have not produced the same racial diversity as plans that consider a child's race. Choice plans that do not have a racial component assume that everyone is equally able to choose any option, and do not consider the constraints, including lack of information, that limit the choices made by those without access to high-quality networks.
- The experience in districts that have abandoned their race-conscious desegregation plans has shown that race-neutral student assignment plans often result in racial resegregation, and in some districts, declining achievement for minority students.
- Although in most circumstances it would not produce nearly as high a level of desegregation as existing racial desegregation plans, socioeconomic integration is educationally valuable in its own right and may offer some opportunities for integrated education. In defining social and economic desegregation policies, primary emphasis should not be on individual free lunch status—special attention should be given to areas of concentrated poverty, areas with concentrations of low-achieving students, areas where linguistic minorities are segregated, and geographic diversity.