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Northern New England Schools Experience Early Racial Change *Schools Should Act Now to Avoid a Segregated Future*

LOS ANGELES—According to a report released today by the UCLA Civil Rights Project, school segregation in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont is presently modest and localized, especially compared to other parts of the country, but slowly increasing racial diversity signals changes ahead for the region’s schools. Northern New England has long been a predominantly white area of the country, and these states currently have relatively small and solvable segregation problems, much like what most of Southern New England had a generation ago. [***Diversity in the Distance: The Onset of Racial Change in Northern New England Schools***](#), coauthored by Jennifer Ayscue and Shoshee Jau, finds, however, that black, Latino, and Asian students are a growing share of public school enrollment in the region, while the total number of students in all three states is shrinking.

Using 1989-2010 data from the National Center on Education Statistics, the report explores trends in enrollment and school segregation at the state level in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont, as well as in three major metropolitan areas—Portland, Maine; Manchester-Nashua, New Hampshire; and Burlington, Vermont.

The main findings of the report include:

Decreasing size of enrollment

- Unlike most of the country, public school enrollment decreased between 1989 and 2010 in all three northern New England states.
- The number of students enrolled in Maine’s schools decreased by 14% between 1989 and 2010 reaching 183,427 students in 2010.
- Vermont’s enrollment increased by 11% from 1989 to 1999 but then decreased by 17% from 1999 to 2010, reaching a two-decade low of 85,131 students in 2010.
- In New Hampshire, enrollment increased by 20% from 1989 to 1999, then decreased by 6% between 1999 and 2010 to reach 194,001 students in 2010.

Increasing racial diversity

- In 2010, the racial composition of schools in each of these northern New England states was slightly more diverse than it had been 20 years prior.
- In 1989, all of the districts in the three main metros (Portland, Manchester-Nashua, and Burlington) were predominantly white; however, by 2010, this was no longer the case.
- In 2010, Portland Public Schools—one of nine public school districts in metro Portland—could be classified as diverse, indicating that the district enrolled between 20% and 60% nonwhite students. Two of 53 public school districts in the Manchester-Nashua region—Manchester

School District and Nashua School District—and two of 17 public school districts in metro Burlington—Burlington School District and Winooski School District—were classified as diverse in 2010.

- White students in 2010 accounted for 93% of the enrollment in Maine and Vermont and 90% in New Hampshire.
- Black students comprised the next largest share of students in Maine (2%) and Vermont (2%); Latinos (4%) accounted for the second largest share of enrollment in New Hampshire.
- Schools in metro Portland, Manchester-Nashua, and Burlington were slightly more diverse than their respective states' student enrollment in 2010. The white share of enrollment was 91% in metro Portland, 88% in Manchester-Nashua, and 88% in metro Burlington.

Disparate exposure to white students

- In 2010, in all three states, the typical white student attended a school that most closely reflected the overall racial composition of the state's student enrollment.
- In Maine and Vermont, the typical black student was less exposed to white students than Latinos, attending a school with 77% white peers in Maine and 82% white peers in Vermont.
- In New Hampshire, the typical Latino student was least exposed to white students, attending, on average, a school with 76% white peers.

Emergence of majority minority schools in metro areas

- In 2010, approximately 2% of schools in metro Portland and Manchester-Nashua were majority minority with enrollments of more than half minority students.
- None of metro Burlington's schools were majority minority.

Segregation by poverty alongside emerging segregation by race

- The share of low-income students increased in all three states between 1989 and 2010.
- In 2010, New Hampshire had the smallest share of low-income students at 25%. In Vermont, 37% of students were low income, and Maine had the largest share of low-income students at 43%.
- In 2010, in Maine and Vermont, the typical black student attended a school with the largest share of low-income peers (51% in Maine; 45% in Vermont). In New Hampshire, the typical Latino student was exposed to the largest share of low-income peers (39%). High poverty concentrations are related to inequality in schools.
- In the two metros with majority minority schools—Portland and Manchester-Nashua—the share of low-income students in majority minority schools was disproportionately large, producing a double segregation of students by race and poverty.
- In metro Portland, where 32% of the metro's students were low income, 76% of students in majority minority schools were low income. At an even more extreme level, 85% of students in Manchester-Nashua's majority minority schools were low income even though the metro's overall share of low-income students was only 23%.

The report summarizes research showing minority segregated schools are associated with unequal educational opportunities and outcomes including fewer experienced and less qualified teachers, high levels of teacher turnover, less stable student enrollments, inadequate facilities and learning materials, high dropout rates, and lower academic achievement. Desegregated schools, on the other hand, tend to show improved academic achievement for minority students with no corresponding decline for white students, improved critical thinking skills, reduction in students' willingness to accept stereotypes, heightened ability to communicate and make friends across racial lines, high levels of civic responsibility, and increased likelihood of living and working in diverse environments later in life.

“Much of the work of The Civil Rights Project is about documenting the grim consequences of entrenched segregation,” commented Professor Gary Orfield, co-director of the Civil Rights Project. “Upper New England is remarkably free of these problems so far, and with foresight the region could avoid the problems afflicting too many cities in Southern New England.”

The report provides numerous recommendations for addressing racial change and integration in northern New England’s schools. In Maine and Vermont, town tuitioning policies could include civil rights standards; in Maine and New Hampshire, charters schools should promote diversity and be required to adopt civil rights standards. States should also support communities and school districts experiencing racial change by helping them create voluntary desegregation plans. Schools and districts should train current teachers and administrators in working with an increasingly diverse student body and recruit a more diverse teaching staff. Collaboration between fair housing efforts and school policies should also be promoted.

“Unlike most of the nation, schools in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont are in a unique position, at the beginning of the process of racial transition,” said co-author Ayscue. “Northern New England has a great opportunity to learn from the successes and failures of the rest of the country in addressing racial transition and school segregation. They can act now to provide their students and communities with the benefits of racial diversity instead of allowing segregation to occur.”

This report is the eighth in a series of 13 reports on school segregation trends in the Eastern States and can be found [here](#).

About the Civil Rights Project at UCLA

Founded in 1996 by former Harvard professors [Gary Orfield](#) and Christopher Edley, Jr., The Civil Rights Project/*Proyecto Derechos Civiles* is now co-directed by Orfield and [Patricia Gándara](#), professors at UCLA. Its mission is to create a new generation of research in social science and law on the critical issues of civil rights and equal opportunity for racial and ethnic groups in the United States. It has monitored the success of American schools in equalizing opportunity and has been the authoritative source of segregation statistics. CRP has commissioned more than 400 [studies](#), published more than 15 [books](#) and issued numerous reports from authors at universities and research centers across the country. The U.S. Supreme Court, in its 2003 *Grutter v. Bollinger* decision upholding affirmative action. This nonpartisan center has been the leading source of desegregation statistics throughout its history.

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