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**UCLA Report Finds Delaware's School Resegregation Increasing after  
Dissolution of its Groundbreaking Metropolitan Desegregation Plan**

LOS ANGELES—Black and Latino students in Wilmington, Delaware, attend schools with escalating segregation since the pioneering city-suburban desegregation plan ended, according to a new report by the UCLA Civil Rights Project. During the academic year 1989-90, when the metropolitan school desegregation plan was in effect, no students—of any race—attended intensely segregated schools (90-100% minority). Today nearly 20% of Delaware's black students, and about 11% of Delaware's Latino students, go to intensely segregated schools with overlapping concentrations of poverty. At the same time, Delaware's overall student enrollment grew more racially diverse.

The court-ordered consolidation of the school districts in Wilmington and surrounding suburbs, accompanied by the implementation of a comprehensive school desegregation plan, once made Delaware one of the most integrated states in the nation. [\*The Courts, the Legislature and Delaware's Resegregation\*](#), by Arielle Niemeyer, uses federal school enrollment data from 1989 to 2010 to assess the changes in school enrollment and segregation over time. The report documents how federal court decisions, which dismantled the school desegregation plan in 1996, and state government efforts, like the 2001 Neighborhood Schools Act, are linked to the profound resegregation detailed in the report.

The researchers also looked at demographic trends, namely the recent growth in enrollment of Latino and Asian students. The report affirms that there are a growing number of multiracial schools with three or more racial groups making up at least 10% of the enrollment. These schools in Delaware tend to have a large majority of two minority groups, with at least a tenth of either whites or Asians as well.

**THE MAIN FINDINGS OF THE REPORT INCLUDE:**

**1. Increasing segregation by race and socioeconomic status for Delaware's black and Latino students**

- Intensely segregated (90-100% minority) and apartheid (99-100% minority) schools did not exist in metro Wilmington in 1989-90. By 2010-11, intensely segregated schools grew to a troubling

15% of schools in the metropolitan area and apartheid schools accounted for almost 8% of Wilmington's public schools. In spite of these serious setbacks, Delaware still reports less segregation than adjoining states which never had comprehensive metropolitan desegregation plans.

- In 2010-11, 47.3% of metro Wilmington students were low income, however, the typical Latino student attended a school where 61.3% students were low-income and the typical black student attended one where 56.2% were low-income. By contrast, the average white student attended a school where only 37.5% of the students were low-income.
- In 2010-11, almost 90% of the students in Wilmington's apartheid schools were low-income, highlighting the extreme intersection between racial isolation and concentrations of poverty.

## **2. Growing racial diversity in Delaware's schools**

- The white share of Delaware's public school enrollment decreased from 69% in 1989 to 50% in 2010. During the same time period the black share of enrollment grew modestly to 32%; the Latino share of enrollment increased from 3% to 13%. The Asian share of enrollment doubled, but, even so, it accounted for less than 5% of the total enrollment in 2010.
- Between 1989 and 2010 the number of multiracial schools grew by 142% to comprise 41.5% of Delaware public schools.

***The Courts, the Legislature and Delaware's Resegregation*** summarizes substantial research showing segregated schools' strong links to multiple forms of unequal educational opportunity and outcomes. Minority segregated schools tend to have fewer experienced and less qualified teachers, high levels of teacher turnover, less stable student enrollments, inadequate facilities and learning materials, and high dropout rates. Conversely, desegregated schools are related to profound benefits for *all* students, including improved academic achievement for minority students with no decline for white students, heightened critical thinking skills, loftier educational and career expectations, reduction in students' willingness to accept stereotypes, the ability to communicate and make friends across racial lines, and high levels of civic responsibility.

"In fewer than 15 years, deliberate decisions by courts and lawmakers helped drive school resegregation at a rapid pace," said author Niemeyer. "But the troubling levels of segregation we found, which are significantly higher than before unitary status was granted, can be reversed if public officials and school leaders embrace Delaware's growing diversity and reaffirm their commitment to bold integration initiatives."

Numerous recommendations for addressing demographic change and resegregation are included in the report. For example, Delaware should develop state-level student assignment policies that reduce racial isolation and promote diverse schools. Policies should include ways for districts to foster diverse schools, recruit a diverse teaching staff, provide a framework for developing and supporting intra and inter-district programs, and require that the state have diversity policies to assure fair access for all groups for both public and charter schools. Strong magnet schools and transfer programs both within

and across district boundaries should promote more racially integrated schools and minimize “white flight” to outlying districts. Within the Wilmington area, school attendance boundaries should be redrawn to mitigate the effects of the 2001 Neighborhood Schools Act, which reconnected residential segregation to school segregation. In addition, a controlled choice plan, which would alleviate the segregating impacts of school attendance boundaries, could be implemented. Collaboration between fair housing efforts and school desegregation policies should also be promoted.

“Delaware is steadily slipping into a pattern of deepening segregation and inequality as it goes through the historic racial transformation that is changing the U.S.,” noted Gary Orfield, UCLA Civil Rights Project Co-director and research professor. “The state’s educators need to point out the consequences and suggest ways to use choice mechanisms that support lasting diversity.”

The report is the ninth in a series of reports on school segregation trends along the Eastern Seaboard 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 commissioned more than 400 [studies](#), published more than 15 [books](#) and issued numerous reports from authors at universities and research centers across the country.

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