

Education in New Jersey: Policy Issues & Opportunities¹

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New Jersey is widely recognized as having one of the strongest public school systems in the nation. New Jersey regularly ranks among the top states in the nation in the performance of its students in reading and math. Several of its public schools are nationally recognized. In 2011, New Jersey ranked second in the nation (behind Massachusetts) in fourth grade reading performance in National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) rankings, according to a July 2013 report by The Education Trust (2011 data).² It scored third in the nation (behind Maryland and Massachusetts) across all subjects and grade levels (2011). Most recently, according to Education Week's 2014 *Quality Counts* Report, New Jersey ranked third in the nation on its K-12 Achievement Index (behind Massachusetts and Maryland), which measures 18 indicators including current achievement levels, improvements over time, and poverty-based disparities or gaps. This same report found that New Jersey ranks in the top five states nationally for high school graduation rates. New Jersey students also rank top in the nation for AP scores.

New Jersey Schools at a Glance (2012-13 school year, unless otherwise stated)

Number of School Districts	603 (590 operating and 13 non-operating)
Number of public schools	2,492, including 2,001 elementary and 443 secondary
Public school enrollment	1.36 million children (2013-14)
Number of charter schools	87
Charter school enrollment	30,000 children
Number of children on free or reduced price lunch	519,000 children
Students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP)	63,700 children
Students with special needs	220,000 children

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² <http://www.edtrust.org>

State aid for education	\$7.9 billion (FY2015)
Number of teachers	118,000
Median salary for a classroom teacher	\$62,583
Median salary for a principal	\$117,750
Median salary for a superintendent	\$176,505
NJ high school graduation rate	87.5%
Average per pupil annual spending	\$14,783 (compared to national average of \$11,864 (2013-14))

Serving Low-Income and African-American/Latino Students. In comparison to other states and in measuring progress over time, New Jersey fares well in terms of how its educational system serves low-income, African-American, and Latino students. New Jersey ranked sixth nationally in fourth grade reading scores among low-income students (Education Trust 2011 data). It performed comparatively well for reading improvement among low-income students, ranking fourth. It fared relatively well in comparison to other states for scores across grade levels and subjects for low-income students, ranking seventh (Massachusetts scored significantly higher than any other state). New Jersey’s track record across grade levels and subjects for African-American students is also significantly better than most other states (New Jersey ranked second on this measure); it drops to ninth for performance among Latino students, although still does better than the national average. The College Board reported in 2013 that many more low-income New Jersey students are participating in AP courses, and in 2014 found that more African-American and Latino students are scoring high enough on AP exams to earn college credit.

Disparities Remain. Despite New Jersey’s comparative strength nationally in educating low-income and African-American and Latino students and positive trends over time, significant disparities remain. Only 75% of low-income students graduate in New Jersey, compared with 90% of middle- and upper-income students (2012 data). Further, there are still undeniably many disparities in educational quality between New Jersey’s suburban districts and its largely low-income, African-American, and Latino urban districts. Trenton, for instance, has a 53% graduation rate and Newark and Jersey City graduation rates are at 67%. Nearly half of New Jersey’s Abbott schools and districts (See discussion below on Abbott schools) have been identified as in need of improvement under state and federal accountability systems. Paul Trachtenberg and his colleagues, in a 2013 study on “apartheid schools” in New Jersey, found

that New Jersey schools are among the most intensely segregated in the country, behind only Illinois and Michigan.³

Strategies to Improve Educational Outcomes

While New Jersey's education system ranks extremely well nationally, it also continues to be challenged by educational inequities between its low-income mostly urban school districts and its wealthier suburban counterparts; these persistent disparities have been an impetus for many of the policy and judicial reforms that have taken place over recent years. Education policy in New Jersey has also been heavily influenced by national policy reforms, in areas such as curriculum standards and testing and the charter school movement.

Described below are some of the most significant strategies and interventions that have dominated the field of education reform both nationally and in New Jersey.

Curriculum Standards, Evaluation and Testing: Common Core and PARCC

A national trend that has had lasting public policy ramifications in New Jersey is that of increased evaluation and testing, which began gaining traction in the 1990s. Concerns about quality and consistency of public education gave rise to the No Child Left Behind Law, signed into law by President Bush in January 2002, which ushered in a new era of accountability and testing with its focus on standards-based education reform, requirements for state-based annual standardized testing, requirements that schools demonstrate Annual Yearly Progress or face closure or conversion to charter schools, and requirements that states provide highly qualified teachers and define that standard. More recently, in 2009, the National Governors Association convened an initiative to develop a set of Common Core State Standards, in response to concerns that the US was falling behind internationally in its educational system and that students were not graduating from high school with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in college and the workforce. Forty-six states and the District of Columbia voluntarily adopted the Common Core Standards in 2010 and 2011; New Jersey adopted the new state standards in 2010.

The adoption of the Common Core Standards created a need for new testing to reflect the new curriculum content in the Common Core. A key element of the Common Core is a focus on differentiated instruction to reflect the varying needs and skills of students, including special education students. The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) is a collaboration of 19 states, including New Jersey, that was created to develop a common set of computer-based K-12 assessments in English language arts/Literacy and math linked to the more rigorous Common Core Standards. The new PARCC assessments, which will be used in grades 3 – 11, are linked to the Common Core standards, with tests being

³ Paul Trachtenberg, Gary Orfield, and Greg Flaxman, Rutgers University Institute on Education Law and Policy & UCLA Civil Rights Project, *New Jersey's Apartheid and Intensely Segregated Urban Schools*

administered by Pearson and ETS. They contain more rigorous content benchmarks and will replace the existing NJASK and HSPA tests; students will be tested nine different times during the year. The tests are online rather than traditional paper and pencil tests and require updated technology to administer. Testing will begin in NJ in spring 2015 and the NJDOE recently sent all school districts an implementation guide to ensure that their curricula align with the Common Core standards and the upcoming PARCC exams.

The PARCC tests are being intensely debated in New Jersey and around the country. In some parts of the country, there is growing opposition to the concept of federal standards and testing, and a desire to have educational policies left to local community control (Arizona, Florida, and Tennessee have dropped out of the PARCC partnership). A parallel concern is that the increased intensity of testing has created a “testing culture” that means that teachers only “teach to the test” and don’t have room in the curriculum for creative instruction. Parent and educator groups worry that the barrage of testing undermines educational progress for the students.

In New Jersey, and elsewhere, there is also intense discussion about how the tests will be used in “high stakes” ways – not just to document student progress, but also to evaluate teachers and to make decisions about whether schools remain open. Save Our Schools NJ Community Organizing (SOS) has been a leader in the organizing movement to end “high-stakes” testing. The New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) has called for a delay in linking PARCC results to teacher evaluations and bills are pending in the legislature that would delay implementation. In July 2014, Governor Christie announced an executive order creating a new task force (entirely appointed by the Governor) to study the effectiveness of state testing, including PARCC and the Common Core State Standards. He also announced that the State will lessen the weight given the new PARCC tests in teacher evaluations for the next two years; instead of the current 30 percent weight, it will be reduced to 10 percent in 2015 and 20 percent in 2016.

Improving Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education – including high quality preschool – is another area of focus for education policymakers seeking to improve long-term educational outcomes. Research has demonstrated the importance of developing an aligned and coordinated system of early learning to achieve positive long-term outcomes, particularly in the area of literacy. Early childhood education spans birth through third grade, with third grade recognized as a critical year for achieving reading proficiency. Research has demonstrated strong linkages between a student’s ability to read proficiently by the third grade and her or his long-term educational success. A 2011 study determined that one in six children who are not reading proficiently by third grade do not graduate high school on time, a rate four times higher than that of a proficient reader. If students are both low-income and not reading proficiently, the chances of

them not graduating on time jump to 26%, more than six times the rate for all proficient readers.⁴

Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ) has identified five areas critical to building a strong early learning system: 1) New Jersey provides full-day kindergarten in all districts (currently only 78% of New Jersey school districts offer full-day programs); 2) Transitions for children, their families, and schools are coordinated and aligned throughout early childhood years; 3) New Jersey's teaching and administrator certifications support strong training in early learning skills; 4) District administrators and teachers use assessment findings properly to improve student success, while expanding focus to include social/emotional development, and engaging families in the assessment process; and 5) Sufficient state funding is provided for full-day high-quality preschool and full-day kindergarten.

Numerous studies have been conducted demonstrating the benefits of high-quality preschool education. Research has shown that children who attend high-quality preschool are better prepared for kindergarten, are less likely to require special education or to repeat a grade (resulting in potential cost savings), have better developed social and emotional skills, and are more likely to graduate from high school, among other benefits.⁵ Rutgers University released a study in March 2013 of fourth and fifth graders who had gone through the Abbott pre-school program; the study found that Abbott preschool programs increased achievement in Language Arts and Literacy, Math, and Science. The study further found that two years of preschool beginning at age 3 resulted in higher achievement than one year alone. (Rutgers University National Institute for Early Education Research, Abbott Preschool Program Longitudinal Effects Study: Fifth Grade Follow-Up, Steven Barnett, Ph.D., March 20, 2013)⁶

New Jersey is ahead of many other states in its preschool program, ranking as one of the top two states in the nation for preschool attendance. Much of this success can be attributed to NJ's Abbott-funded preschool program, which provides high-quality preschool with state funds to approximately 51,000 children living in 35 of New Jersey's low-income communities, or about one-quarter of the state's children (31 Abbott and 4 additional communities) (2011-12). In 2008, the NJ Legislature approved an expansion of high-quality preschool throughout New Jersey as part of the School Funding Reform Act (SFRA). The SFRA requires providing all low-income children in New Jersey with high quality preschool, which experts estimate carries a price tag of \$300 million. However, due to budgetary woes, the state has not fully funded this mandate, with only four additional districts receiving expansion funds. If the requirements of the SFRA were fully implemented, an additional 35,000 children would receive high-quality preschool, bringing the total served to about 86,000 children. Under SFRA, districts with high

⁴ http://acnj.org/downloads/2014_07_15_strong_early_learning_systems_strong_young_readers.pdf

⁵ http://acnj.org/downloads/2013_02_01_KeepingThePromiseofPrek.pdf

⁶ <http://nieer.org/sites/nieer/files/APPLES%205th%20Grade.pdf>

concentrations of low-income children are eligible for state funding to serve all 3 and 4-year olds in that district – a total of 79 districts. All other districts would receive preschool funding on a per pupil basis for children eligible for free or reduced-price school meals.⁷

Fair School Funding

A major focus in New Jersey has been on improving the educational quality of its struggling urban school districts. New Jersey has a 40-plus-year history of judicial involvement in working to address inequities in the financing of public education, with the goal of creating a quality educational system in the state's most disadvantaged school districts. In 1970, four NJ cities challenged the constitutionality of the State's school funding system, arguing that vast funding disparities deprived students in low-wealth communities of a "thorough and efficient" system of education. Since that time, more than 20 decisions have been handed down, starting with *Robinson v. Cahill* (1973-76) and continuing with the landmark *Abbott v. Burke* decisions (1985-present).

In the 1980s, at the time when the first Abbott decision was rendered, New Jersey was faced with huge disparities in per pupil expenditures between the high-wealth, suburban districts and the poorer urban ones and, consequently, glaring disparities in equality of opportunity. In 1984, poor urban districts received only 71% of the funding of their wealthy counterparts due to an overreliance on the local property tax system to fund education. As a result of the groundbreaking NJ Supreme Court Abbott decisions, which found the state's funding formulas to be unconstitutional, that funding disparity has now been eliminated and in fact, supplemental funding has been allocated to poor districts in recognition of the effects of concentrated poverty. Funds were used as directed by the Court – Abbott school districts hired vice principals, teacher tutors, basic skills teachers, guidance counselors, social workers, security staff and instructional aides. Class sizes were generally reduced to 20-22 students in grades 1-5.

In terms of academic results, test scores in the Abbott districts, as measured by both state and national assessments, rose in the fourth and eighth grades, narrowing the performance gap between Abbott students and other students in the state. From 1999 to 2007, the difference in test scores between the Abbott districts and the rest of the state fell 11 points in fourth grade mathematics and 7 points in fourth grade reading. In the eighth grade, the gap was reduced by 5 points in mathematics and 1 point in reading. Results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) confirmed these trends.⁸

⁷ http://acnj.org/downloads/2013_06_01_PrekExpansionOverview.pdf

⁸ *Assessing Success in School Finance Litigation: The Case of New Jersey, Education, Equity and the Law*, Margaret E. Goertz, Michael Weiss, November 2009
http://www.equitycampaign.org/i/a/document/11775_EdEquityLawNo1.pdf

In addition to academic progress, other major results included: substantial reform in school funding, particularly for at-risk students and high-need schools in New Jersey, making the state a national leader in fair school funding and providing the resources needed to improve student performance; establishment of high quality preschool for 51,000 three- and four-year old children in urban communities (nearly 80% of eligible 3 and 4 year old children in Abbott districts were enrolled in state-funded preschool programs in 2005-06); and implementation of a statewide school construction program to ensure that all New Jersey students attend school in facilities that are safe, educationally adequate, and not overcrowded -- the program has built over 100 new and renovated urban schools and provided grants to support hundreds of other school construction projects throughout the state.⁹

School Funding Reform Act of 2008 (SFRA). In 2008, the State adopted the School Funding Reform Act (SFRA), which moved the state from a “dollar-driven” to a “standards-linked school funding system.” The law was in part driven by tensions resulting from state underfunding of low- and medium-wealth non-Abbott districts compared to the Court-ordered adequate funding of Abbott districts. These tensions, coupled with an invitation from the Court in Abbott IV to devise a formula tied to quality educational standards, led the legislature to devise a new funding formula that would “follow the child” with funding allocated to districts based on their numbers of at-risk students. The new formula replaced the longstanding “parity remedy” with a weighted formula that calculates funding on a per pupil base cost for general education students (adjusted by elementary, middle or high school), a weight for at-risk students, ELL students, and combination students, as well as per pupil amounts for preschool and students with disabilities. The per pupil base costs are determined based upon curriculum content and performance standards. The SFRA formula then calculates an “Adequacy Budget” that is “wealth equalized,” meaning that it is adjusted based upon a community’s property wealth and income. The state then calculates a district’s “local fair share” (based on property tax revenues) with the rest made up through “Equalization Aid.” This aid is delivered as a single aid stream affording districts flexibility as to allocation of resources. The formula also includes a three-year periodic review, requiring the NJDOE Commissioner and Governor to review the formula and recommend adjustments to the legislature.

The Court in its 2009 Abbott XX ruling upheld the formula and lifted its remedial funding order, clearing the way for implementation. The Court noted that it had “reach[ed] the point where it is possible to say with confidence that the most disadvantaged school children in the State will not be left out or left behind.” Further, “The State has constructed a fair and equitable means designed to fund the costs of a thorough and efficient education, measured against the delivery of the [state academic and performance standards].” The Court placed two conditions on its approval: 1) to “fully fund” the formula for the first three years of implementation; and 2) to

⁹ <http://www.edlawcenter.org/assets/files/pdfs/publications/SFRA-LinkingStandardsToResources.pdf>

“diligently” review the formula after its initial three years of operation and “adjust the formula as necessary based on the results of that review.”¹⁰

The first two years of operation, the State provided almost all of the funding required by SFRA. When Governor Christie was elected, however, he cut \$1.1 billion in funding in his first year in office and refused to appropriate an additional \$500 million increase required by the formula. In response, the Court found that the State had deliberately violated the “express mandate” in Abbott XX for three years of full formula funding. The Court ordered the Christie administration to calculate and provide aid for 2010-11 in accordance with the SFRA, but only for the special needs districts. Funding was not restored for other districts, and through 2014, the statewide shortfall in formula funding has reached \$5.1 billion and funding disparities between Abbott and wealthy suburban districts have reappeared. Education Law Center published a report in July 2014, *Shortchanging New Jersey Students: How Inadequate Funding Has Led to Reduced Staff and Growing Disparities in the State’s Public Schools*, showing the relationship between underfunding and understaffing of teachers, counselors and other critical staff.¹¹ The Christie administration also attempted to change the formula itself as part of the three-year review to lower the weights for at-risk and ELL students, as well as the combination weight. The legislature blocked the refashioning of the formula.

It remains to be seen whether the underfunding of the SFRA will be continued under a new Administration or whether NJ will benefit from a renewed commitment to education. One key strategy that would benefit not only public education but a host of other public policy priorities is addressing the State’s overall budget crisis, one of the worst in the nation, which has resulted in the downgrading of New Jersey’s bond rating by all three credit rating agencies. As long as this issue remains unsolved, it is likely that fully funding the SFRA will remain an uphill battle. Better Choices Coalition, a collection of mostly labor and consumer protection advocates, has emerged as a voice calling for enhanced revenues to enable NJ to address public policy priorities such as education and infrastructure investment.

Most recently, in an effort to expand the number of disadvantaged communities included under the fair funding umbrella, the Education Law Center has joined the *Bacon* case demanding that the State comply with previous court decisions that require the same equitable funding – as well as preschool programs – for the 16 mostly southern New Jersey rural districts as has been afforded the Abbott urban districts.

State Takeover of Local School Districts

Another strategy to address underperforming school districts was launched by New Jersey in 1987 when it passed legislation authorizing state takeover of local school districts. The State took over Jersey City in 1987, followed by Paterson in 1991 and Newark in 1995. In 2013, the

¹⁰ <http://www.edlawcenter.org/assets/files/pdfs/publications/SFRA-LinkingStandardsToResources.pdf>

¹¹ <http://www.edlawcenter.org/assets/files/pdfs/publications/Shortchanging%20New%20Jersey%20Students.pdf>

State took over control of the Camden school district. With state control comes state power to appoint a superintendent and relegate the school board to advisory status. The State's most controversial appointment in recent history has been Newark School Superintendent Cami Anderson, who has led the "One Newark" school reorganization, which has included controversial school closings, teacher and principal firings, and launching of new charter schools. The original impetus for the takeover legislation was local district mismanagement and corruption, but poor student performance was also a factor.

Reviews of state school takeover are mixed. The state has had trouble figuring out an exit strategy, and has generally kept control of school districts where it has taken over, with Paterson and Newark still under state control decades later (Jersey City won back some controls in 2007). The state has a system, called the Quality Single Accountability Continuum (QSAC) which measures improvement in five areas: fiscal, personnel, operations, governance and instruction. Districts may be returned to local control if certain benchmarks are met, but the State still has discretion as to whether to do so, and has maintained controls of districts even when benchmarks have been achieved (legislation has been introduced that would mandate state return to local control upon benchmarks being met). Parent and community groups have challenged state control, arguing that the interests of the local students were subsumed to other interests. Some analysts have argued that a system of shared control would be the best path toward achieving quality education for disadvantaged students, in recognition of historical experience in places such as Newark where local control historically led to corruption, patronage hiring, cronyism, and mismanagement.¹²

In 2007, the state enacted legislation permitting appointment of a fiscal monitor to oversee a school district's budget, purchasing, and personnel practices; after Lakewood was assigned a monitor in April 2014, the state monitored a total of eight districts. In general, it appears that the State has done better at financial management and efficiency than it has with improving the quality of education in the school system.

Charter Schools

The original vision for charter schools in the U.S. came in 1988 from Albert Shanker, the president of the American Federation of Teachers. After visiting a school in Cologne, Germany, Mr. Shanker put forth the idea for a new kind of public school where teachers would experiment with creative and fresh teaching ideas. He argued that charter schools could promote social mobility for working-class children and social cohesion among America's increasingly diverse populations. His vision was of schools where teachers had more say in how schools were run, leading to better educational outcomes for students.¹³ In 1991, Minnesota

¹² Robert Curvin: *Inside Newark*, 2014

¹³ <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/31/opinion/sunday/albert-shanker-the-original-charter-school-visionary.html>

created the first charter school law. New Jersey enacted its version, The Charter School Program Act, in 1995 under Governor Whitman. In total, 41 states and the District of Columbia have charter school laws as do many other countries. Charter schools are public schools that operate outside the governance of the school district. New Jersey started its program with 13 schools and experienced relatively slow growth in charters in the first decade. Since that time, charter schools have expanded rapidly, with 87 schools serving close to 30,000 students, primarily clustered in urban districts. Under the law, local districts are required to pay 90 percent of the district's per-pupil costs for each student, with some exceptions. Newark's charter school enrollment has more than doubled in the past five years, with close to 20 percent of public school students now in charter schools; the fiscal cost to the district will be a projected \$211.5 million in 2014-15, as those funds are passed on to charters. The "One Newark" Plan calls for a new universal enrollment system with charter school expansion combined with the closing or restructuring of a half-dozen district schools.

In Camden, dramatic changes are underway, authorized by special charter school legislation unique to Camden, known as the Camden Urban Hope Act of 2012. In 2013-14, Camden had a total K-12 enrollment of 15,000 students, with 11,000 in 26 public neighborhood and magnet schools and 4,000 in 11 existing charter schools. Within the last year, NJDOE has approved a total of three charter chains to open in Camden – Uncommon Charter Schools, Mastery Charter, and KIPP – which will open a total of 16 schools serving a total of 9,214 Camden students. Consequently, these three charter organizations will be responsible for educating approximately 60% of Camden's total student population. The result is that neighborhood public and magnet schools, as well as "homegrown" charter schools are expected to close in the coming months. In the FY2014-15 budget, payments to charter schools from the district budget will increase from \$55.5 million to \$72 million and announcements were made recently that 241 staff will be laid off from district-run schools to address the resulting budget shortfall. In addition to the Camden approvals, two new charter schools have been approved in Trenton in the current fiscal year; over the last year, four charters elsewhere in the state were also slated for closure.

Reviews on the effectiveness of charter schools have been mixed. Some are exceptional in terms of performance; in Newark, for instance, some of the top rated schools in the district are charters, far exceeding their peer institutions in terms of graduation rates and test scores. A recent study (although contested) by Stanford University researchers found that on average charters outperform their local districts, including a finding that in New Jersey, students attending charter schools benefit from an additional 43 reading days of learning and an additional 58 math days of learning.¹⁴ Charters potentially offer students in chronically underperforming district schools choices and opportunities for a better education. On the

¹⁴ <http://credo.stanford.edu/documents/NCSS%202013%20Final%20Draft.pdf>

other hand, in New Jersey, 30 of more than 115 approved charter schools have been closed or not renewed by the state, many of them cited for financial problems and poor performance. Nationally, 24 percent of teachers leave their charter schools each year, double the teacher turnover rate at traditional district schools.¹⁵ Further, charter schools on average have lower percentages of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students and students with special needs despite state requirements that the schools be open to all who apply; this fuels claims of discrimination in the enrollment and retention process. Charters are also criticized for lack of accountability to the community and to parents – particularly the charter chains such as KIPP and Uncommon Charters which are out-of-state networks – and for draining funds from district school budgets. Bills have been introduced in the NJ Legislature to require local approval before a new charter is approved.

In a recent opinion in the New York Times, Richard Kahlenberg and Halley Potter of The Century Foundation note that some charter schools around the nation have used the flexibility and resources afforded by charter schools to create schools that are intentionally integrated and to increase the influence of teachers through teacher cooperative models and other means. They suggest that charter schools could be “powerful models from which the larger system of public education can learn.”¹⁶ As yet there are no examples of this model in New Jersey.

Vouchers and School Choice Programs

Educational vouchers (which provide subsidies to parents to send their children to a public or private school of their choosing) have gained traction in other parts of the country, but have not been enacted in New Jersey. Governor Christie is a strong proponent of a voucher program, calling it his top educational priority in his first term; he has unsuccessfully advocated for passage of the Opportunity Scholarship Act, which would provide \$860 million in state funds for a voucher program in a small group of districts.

New Jersey does have an Interdistrict Public School Choice Program, which permits approved choice districts to enroll students who do not reside within their districts at no cost to their parents. The program increases educational opportunities for students and their families by providing students with school options outside of their home district and giving parents the opportunity to select a potentially better performing school for their child. District participation in the program is optional, which also potentially limits the opportunities that are available to students in close proximity to their homes. Once approved, the choice district designates the available seats in specific grades and programs that are open to choice

¹⁵ <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/31/opinion/sunday/albert-shanker-the-original-charter-school-visionary.html>

¹⁶ <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/31/opinion/sunday/albert-shanker-the-original-charter-school-visionary.html>

students. There are currently 136 approved NJ Choice Districts for the 2014-15 school year, though the highest performing schools are not well represented.

Socioeconomically and Racially Integrated Communities

A key but often overlooked strategy is to look beyond the confines of the school system to address the broader societal forces that create racially segregated schools with high concentrations of poor students. Studies have shown that low-income students in integrated schools have higher academic performance than students in high-poverty schools. Data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in mathematics show that low-income fourth graders who attend economically integrated schools are as much as two years ahead of low-income students attending high poverty schools.¹⁷ Moreover, at a national level, majority middle-income schools are much more likely than high-poverty schools to have strong principals, talented and engaged teachers, small class sizes, an excellent curriculum, standards of high expectations for students and teachers, adequate facilities, and engaged parents. These factors, particularly having strong principals and teachers, have all been tied to increased student achievement.

Integrated schools also offer social benefits through exposure of students to others from diverse backgrounds and experiences.¹⁸ James Ryan, in *Five Miles Away, A World Apart*, argues that socioeconomic and racial integration of schools is not as politically impossible as it might seem. He observes that demographic trends are changing the composition of metropolitan areas and creating new opportunities for integrated schools. The percentage of minority students in public schools is growing and by 2042, the U.S. will be majority minority. He notes that housing patterns are also becoming more diverse in terms of income, race and ethnicity in the suburbs and more middle income families are staying in central cities. Here in New Jersey, decades long efforts to foster inclusionary zoning as a result of the NJ Supreme Court Mt. Laurel decisions and advocacy by Fair Share Housing Center have helped to foster some socioeconomic integration of the suburbs, but challenges remain. Rutgers Law Professor David Dante Troutt, in *The Price of Paradise* (2013), underscores the need for metropolitan solutions to the problem of perpetually segregated schools.

In 2013, Rutgers University Institute on Education Law and Policy (Paul Trachtenberg) jointly published a report with the UCLA Civil Rights Project (Gary Orfield and Greg Flaxman): *New Jersey's Apartheid and Intensely Segregated Urban Schools*. Apartheid schools are defined in the study as those with 0 to 1% white students, and Trachtenberg et al found that while apartheid schools makeup only 8% of all the schools in New Jersey, they hold 26% of all black students and almost 13% of Latino students. New Jersey has the third highest fraction of its

¹⁷ <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/31/opinion/sunday/albert-shanker-the-original-charter-school-visionary.html>

¹⁸ James Ryan, *Five Miles Away, A World Apart*, 2010

black students in apartheid schools and the fifth highest concentration of Latino students. The study further found that blacks in New Jersey are more than twice as likely as blacks in the south to attend such schools. Another 21% of black students and 29% of Latino students attend intensely segregated schools where the percentage of minority students is 90% or greater. Thus a total of 47% of black students and 42% of Latino students in New Jersey attend either apartheid or intensely segregated schools.

Trachtenberg and his colleagues make several recommendations for fostering integrated schools: 1) create magnet schools and regional transfer and magnet plans with integration goals and civil rights policies to increase parent information and opportunities to transfer children to more successful and diverse schools in other districts; 2) develop state-supported choice plans, such as charter schools and NJ's public school interdistrict choice program, with explicit goals and procedures to promote racial and socioeconomic diversity; 3) discourage state and local governments from building or subsidizing more low-income housing in areas where students must attend apartheid schools and live in apartheid neighborhoods; and 4) consider seriously school district consolidation to foster civil rights and racial balance goals.

Program Interventions

There are many programmatic approaches to improving public education that have shown promise for disadvantaged populations or challenged school systems. Some of the more noteworthy include:

Better Principals, Better Teachers. Research has demonstrated that improving principal and teacher quality has a demonstrable effect on student academic performance. Programs include leadership development and training for principals (e.g. New Leaders for New Schools and NJ EXCEL) and recruitment of new teachers (e.g. Teach for America, Woodrow Wilson NJ Teaching Fellowship for teachers of STEM subjects).

College Access Programs. To address the challenges many low-income, African-American, and Latino students face in graduating from high school and continuing on to college, colleges and universities around the nation have been investing in college access programs that focus on early intervention and mentoring with students as young as middle school. These programs focus on identifying promising young students and providing them with the support they need to be successful in graduating from high school and being admitted to college. The support continues through the college years. Rutgers Future Scholars is one such example. Other programs focus on re-engaging students that have already dropped out of school, including alternative high schools and programs such as Gateway to College (operating in Newark and Camden) that coordinate with local community colleges to re-engage students and get them on a college track.

Wrap-Around Programs. Wrap-around programs provide services outside of typical school hours, and include afterschool programs, summer programs, etc. A variation on this theme is longer school days and a longer school year, as proposed by Governor Christie last year.

Community Schools. The concept of community schools is gaining attention in NJ and around the nation. A community school represents a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. Using public schools as hubs, community schools bring together many partners to offer a range of supports and opportunities to children, youth, families and communities. The purpose is to improve the quality of education, improve student attendance, engage parents in their children's education, and create stronger connections between the school and the community in which it is located. Annie E. Casey Foundation has been a strong supporter and investor in this approach; Communities in Schools is the largest nationwide model and there is a New Jersey chapter, which supports a handful of sites in New Jersey.

The Harlem Children's Zone. The Harlem Children's Zone in New York is a program that combines elements of community schools, wrap-around programs, and the creation of a charter school. The program uses a neighborhood-based approach that covers 97 blocks of Central Harlem and follows children from birth through college graduation, providing them with extensive support systems including family, social service, and health programs. According to HCZ, the program has served over 12,000 children and 12,000 adults. Replication efforts are underway across the country, including in Newark, Paterson and most recently, Camden, which last year launched the Camden Promise Program serving 1,500 children.

Relevant Fund Grantees

Education Law Center (Our Children/Our Schools Coalition), Save Our Schools NJ Community Organizing, Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ) (improving early childhood education), Fair Share Housing Center (socioeconomically and racially integrated schools)

Other Education Funders in New Jersey

The Schumann Fund for New Jersey invests in and has expertise in public education, with a focus on early childhood education and public policy, including school reform, educational innovation, and evaluation. The Victoria Foundation supports education reform in Newark, in particular improving teaching quality in Newark middle schools and supporting high quality charter, private and parochial schools in Newark. The Council of New Jersey Grantmakers supports an Education Affinity Group which hosts programs and discussions on the topic of education. Additionally, within the last few years, a small group of foundations, including the Prudential Foundation, Victoria Foundation, and Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation collaborated on investments to support Newark Superintendent Cami Anderson's One Newark Plan.

Other Topics Not Covered Herein

Higher education

Special education

Vocational and technical education

Tenure

School to prison pipeline

Workforce development

Civic education

Adult education