

About the Researchers

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School Segregation by Race and Poverty in Metropolitan Chicago

The continued segregation of low-income and minority students from more affluent White students is a serious obstacle to the elimination of race- and class-related gaps in student achievement.

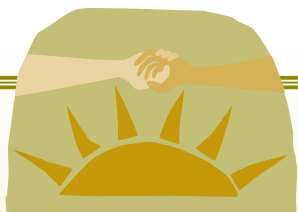
- **Despite the rich diversity of metropolitan Chicago, one of every two public schools in the region exhibits extreme racial isolation, in that its enrollment is made up almost entirely of minority or nonminority students.**
- **Most predominantly minority schools in the region, including schools in the suburbs, have very high concentrations of students in poverty.**
- **In seven out of ten Chicago public schools 90 percent or more of students are minority.**
- **Nearly 60 percent of the city's schools have extremely high concentrations of students in poverty, 90 percent or more.**
- **Minority enrollment and poverty are also highly correlated in suburban schools.**

Introduction

Despite longstanding concerns about educational achievement gaps associated with race, ethnicity, and class, recent data for metropolitan Chicago from the Illinois State Board of Education¹ show that wide gaps in achievement continue to exist. Recent national studies lend support to the Supreme Court's ruling 50 years ago in *Brown v. Board of Education* that segregated schools provide students with unequal educational opportunities. This paper documents the

degree to which Chicago-area students are segregated by race/ethnicity and class and the degree to which racial/ethnic and class segregation covary and can be understood as different dimensions of the same phenomenon. Subsequent papers will document in greater detail how segregated Chicago-area schools differ both in resources and in the academic achievement of their students.

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Metropolitan Chicago Initiative

The Metropolitan Chicago Initiative (MCI) conducts applied research and policy analysis and promotes community capacity-building in the metropolitan Chicago area. Community projects focus on Berwyn-Cicero, where the MCI profiles the status of Latino families and neighborhoods and identifies ways to improve their health, education, and well-being. Regional projects focus on measuring the minority education achievement gap, monitoring education public policy developments, and conducting analysis of 2000 Census data for Chicago-area neighborhoods and municipalities. Current projects are funded by the MacNeal Health Foundation, the Joyce Foundation, and the Chicago Community Trust. For more information, visit www.nd.edu/~latino/mci.htm.

Introduction *continued*

Eliminating the educational achievement gaps between Black, Latino, and Native American students and their White peers, as well as the gaps between low-income and more affluent students, has long been considered crucial to the well-being of young people and their families, to urban communities, and to the nation as a whole.² Among the most notable programs and initiatives intended to eliminate these gaps were the extensive desegregation efforts that took place following the Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and the passage of legislation that has directed more resources to low-income students, like that creating Title I compensatory education programs (1965) and Head Start, the preschool program for low-income children (1965). In addition, influential reports like *A Nation at Risk*³ led to a greater emphasis on testing and accountability with the purpose of ensuring that all students acquire at least basic academic skills. The recent No Child Left Behind Act (2002) now requires that school data such as test scores and graduation rates be disaggregated by race, ethnicity, poverty status, English language proficiency, migrant status, and disability status so as to hold schools accountable for improving the outcomes for each of these categories of students.⁴

From the 1960s through most of the 1980s substantial progress was made in reducing educational achievement gaps associated with race/ethnicity and class.⁵ By the late 1980s, however, national data indicate that progress toward reducing the gap stalled for reasons that are not entirely clear, though it is likely that a combination of factors was responsible.⁶ One of them may be the gradual resegregation of schools. The degree of segregation of Whites from Blacks and Latinos (who seldom were the focus of desegregation efforts) has been increasing in recent years.⁷ Residential segregation and the removal of court-ordered desegregation plans are contributing to the trend toward resegregation, even though school districts can no longer deliberately segregate students by race and ethnicity.

In some cases, including that of Chicago,⁸ judicial rulings requiring schools to desegregate have been rendered ineffective by the changing demography of urban school districts—only 10 percent of students in Chicago public schools (District 299) are non-Latino White. Further, the Supreme Court's 1974 ruling in *Milliken v. Bradley* prohibited metropolitan-wide desegregation plans involving both predominantly minority urban and predominantly White suburban districts in the absence of findings of discrimination in the suburban districts.⁹ As a result, Chicago-area schools, unlike those in other parts of the country, were never desegregated. The degree of residential segregation in metropolitan Chicago, both of Blacks from Whites and Latinos from Whites, is among the most extreme in the country.¹⁰

The implications for school segregation in urban and suburban communities throughout Chicagoland are described in detail in the sections that follow.



Why Does Segregation Matter?

As in the 1950s, segregated schools continue to be unequal schools. Most schools where minority students are concentrated also have high concentrations of students in poverty. At the national level, four out of five schools with 90 percent or more Black and/or Latino students have more than half of their students on free or reduced lunch. Conversely, only one in six schools with 90 percent or more White students has similarly high levels of low-income students.¹¹ Those who call for education policy to focus on addressing the needs of students in high-poverty schools rather than focusing on racially segregated schools by and large are speaking of the same children and the same schools.

Many studies have found that poor and/or minority students tend

to be at an educational disadvantage.¹²

Less well-known are the effects of high-poverty schools on all of their students. For example, a major national study prepared for the US Department of Education found that enrollment in a high-poverty school tends to decrease all students' academic achievement, regardless of any individual's racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic background. That report concluded that although educating individual students in poverty poses a difficult challenge for schools, educating students in schools where many or most of the students are in poverty poses an even greater challenge.¹³

In addition to the demands of addressing the greater academic and nonacademic needs of children in poverty, high-poverty schools

also tend to have fewer instructional resources. For example, high-poverty schools tend to have fewer experienced and credentialed teachers and fewer advanced courses.¹⁴

The primary objective of desegregation efforts has been to promote equality of educational opportunity. Another important goal, however, is social—promoting interethnic and interracial understanding and undoing the structures sustaining the racial polarization of society.¹⁵ Today White students are the most segregated of all racial and ethnic groups.¹⁶ Given the changing racial demographics of the nation, racial isolation is a disadvantage for White students as well as for Latinos and Blacks.

1 <http://www.isbe.net/research/reports.htm#Report%20Card>.

2 R. Ferguson and J. Mehta, "Why Racial Integration and Other Policies since *Brown v. Board of Education* Have Only Partially Succeeded in Narrowing the Achievement Gap," in Timothy Ready, Christopher Edley, Jr., and Catherine E. Snow, eds., *Achieving High Educational Standards for All* (Washington, DC: National Research Council, 2002), 183–217.

3 National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1983).

4 US Department of Education, "Stronger Accountability: Questions and Answers on *No Child Left Behind*," retrieved October 1, 2003, from <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/accountability/schools/accountability.html>.

5 US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education 2002* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2002).

6 Ferguson and Mehta.

7 E. Frankenberg, C. Lee, and G. Orfield, *A Multiracial Society with Segregated Schools: Are We Losing the Dream?* (Cambridge, MA: The Civil Rights Project, 2003).

8 The US District Court for Chicago imposed a desegregation plan for Chicago in 1980. In 2003 the Court is considering removing the desegregation order (*Education Week*, January 29, 2003).

9 Ferguson and Mehta.

10 The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, "Race, Place, and Opportunity: Racial Change and Segregation in the Chicago Metropolitan Area" (2002), at <http://www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/metro/Final%20Chicago%20Paper%20Part%201.pdf>.

11 *The Condition of Education 2002*.

12 For a review of this literature, see Kim M. Lloyd, Marta Tienda, and Anna Zajacova, "Trends in the Educational Achievement of Minority Students since *Brown v. Board of Education*," in Ready, Edley, and Snow, eds.

13 Michael J. Puma, Calvin C. Jones, Donald Rock, and Roberto Fernandez, for Abt Associates, Inc., *Prospects: The Congressionally Mandated Study of Educational Growth and Opportunity, Interim Report* (Washington, DC: US Department of Education, 1993). See also *The Condition of Education 2002*, 58.

14 Willis Hawley and Timothy Ready, eds., *Improving Measures of Access to Equal Educational Opportunity* (Washington, DC: National Research Council, 2003). See also Frankenburg, Lee, and Orfield, 35.

15 Ready, Edley, and Snow, eds., 72.

16 *Ibid.*, 8.



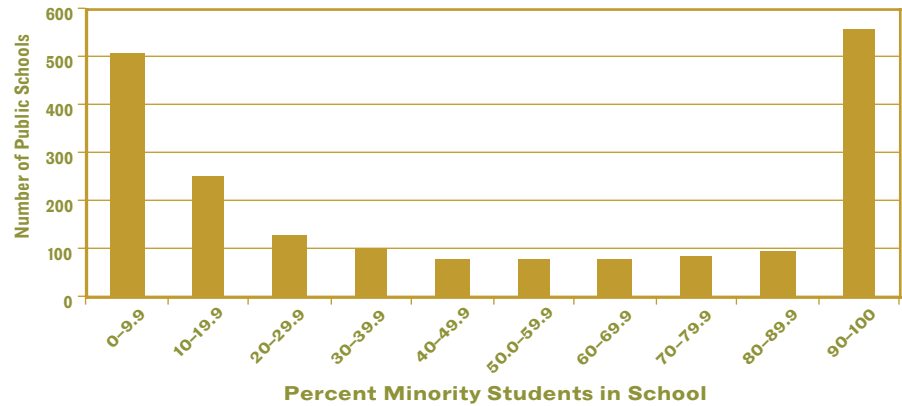
The three wavy lines shown throughout this publication are a symbol from ancient times representing the human intellect in action. From *The Book of Signs*, collected, drawn, and explained by Rudolf Koch (London: The First Edition Club, 1930, page 8).

Minority and Nonminority Students in Chicagoland's Public Schools: A Bimodal Distribution¹⁷

This paper focuses on the isolation of students in metropolitan Chicago according to race/ethnicity and class. The data demonstrate that: (1) Latinos, Blacks, and Native Americans¹⁸ (minority students) in the metropolitan region attend different schools from White students; (2) low-income students tend to be concentrated in different schools from their more affluent peers; and (3) schools with high concentrations of minority students typically have high concentrations of low-income students.¹⁹

The overarching picture in the racial composition of Chicagoland's public schools is that of a bimodal distribution, as seen in Figure 1. More than half (54.5 percent) of the region's public schools exhibit extreme racial isolation, in that their enrollment is made up of either

Figure 1 Minority Composition of Chicagoland Schools



almost all minority students (90–100 percent) or almost none (0–9.9 percent). There is not much middle ground in the form of racially mixed schools.

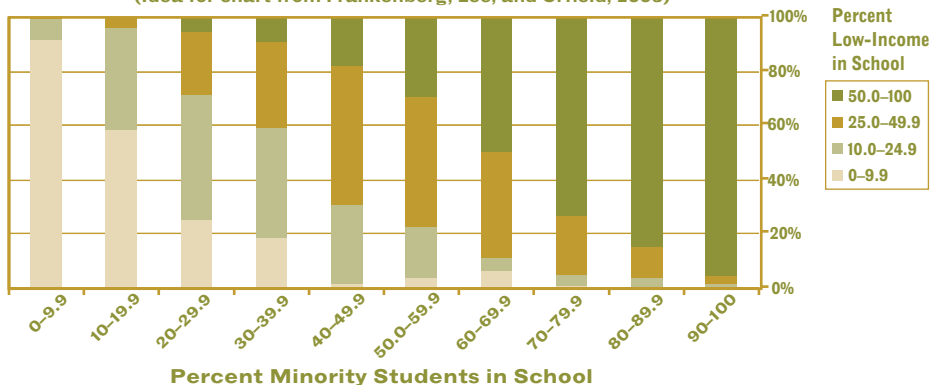
Race and Poverty

In the metropolitan Chicago region, as in the nation overall, predominantly minority public schools typically have high concentrations of students in

poverty (see Figure 2). The correlation between the percentage of minority students in a school and the percentage of children in poverty is extraordinarily high ($r = .92$).²⁰ Almost all schools (92 percent) with a minimal (0–9.9 percent) percentage of minority students also have a minimal percentage of students in poverty (0–9.9 percent). Conversely, almost all (94.4 percent) of the schools with very high concentrations (90–100 percent) of minority students also have at least half (50–100 percent) of their students in poverty.

Thus, predominantly minority schools in the region typically have the challenge of educating very large numbers of students in poverty. Throughout metropolitan Chicago, to focus on schools with high concentrations of children in poverty is to focus on predominantly minority schools.

Figure 2 Relationship between Race and Poverty In Chicagoland Schools (Idea for chart from Frankenberg, Lee, and Orfield, 2003)



17 The data utilized for this brief are from the Illinois State Board of Education's (ISBE) 2002 Report Card. All grade levels and school types that receive ISBE Report Cards were included in the analysis. Martha Zurita conducted all analyses for this report.

18 The term 'minority' will be used throughout this paper to refer to students from these three groups. Asian students are not classified as minority since the state's educational systems do not categorize them as such. Latino, or Hispanic, students may be of any race, whereas White and African American students are non-Hispanic. The terms 'Blacks' and 'African Americans' are used interchangeably, although ISBE utilizes 'Blacks'.

19 ISBE defines low-income students as "pupils aged 3 to 17, inclusive, from families receiving public aid, living in institutions for neglected or delinquent children, being supported in foster homes with public funds, or eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches" (2002 Report Card Definitions). These numbers are self-reported by schools and not based on the 2000 Census poverty rates. For the purposes of this report, the terms 'low-income' and 'poverty' are used interchangeably, although the authors acknowledge that in educational research the terms generally suggest different sources of data.

20 The Pearson's Correlation Coefficient ($r=.92$) was calculated using the school's percentage of minority students and the percentage of low-income students enrolled for all metropolitan public schools. A perfect positive linear correlation would be 1.00, whereas a perfect negative linear correlation would be -1.00.



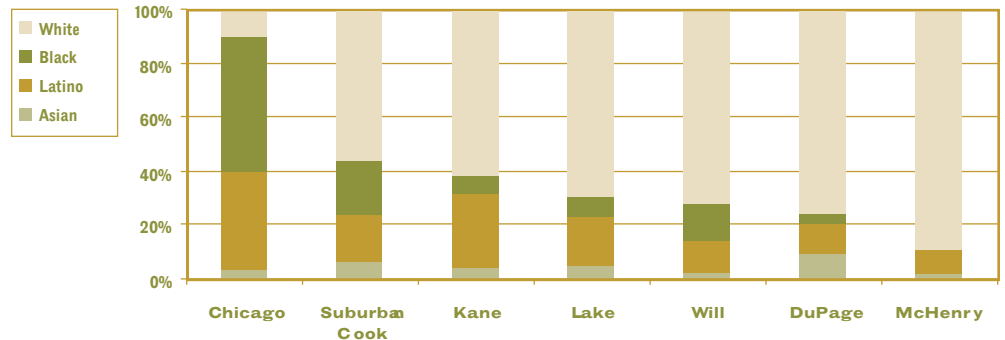
Who Lives Where in Metropolitan Chicago?

Chicagoland as a whole is racially diverse, but the six counties of the metropolitan area are quite distinct from each other (Figure 3). Cook County has by far the highest percentage of minority students in its public schools—especially in the city of Chicago. ‘Minority’ students are the clear majority (87.1 percent) of all students in the Chicago public schools. Almost 40 percent (38.3 percent) of Cook County public school students outside of Chicago also are minorities.

Of the five remaining counties in the metropolitan area, Lake, Kane, and Will counties are nearly as diverse as the suburban portion of Cook County. In 2002 more than one-third (35.0 percent) of the public school students in Kane County were minorities, as were more than one of every four public school students in Lake and Will counties (26.8 percent and 26.9 percent, respectively).

Like the other suburban counties, DuPage and McHenry Counties experienced substantial growth in their minority populations between 1990 and 2000. Nevertheless, their public schools remain overwhelm-

Figure 3
Student Racial Demographics in Chicagoland Public Schools by Jurisdiction



ingly White. Less than 16 percent of students in DuPage County are minorities; only 10 percent of McHenry County students are minorities.

Chicago Public Schools

Since more than 85 percent of students in the Chicago public schools are minorities, it is not surprising that most schools in the city are overwhelmingly minority (Figure 4). In seven out of ten Chicago public schools, minorities make up more than 90 percent of all students. There is no Chicago public school with less than 10 percent minority enrollment.

Chicago's public schools also have very high concentrations of low-income students (Figure 4). In almost

four out of five (78.1 percent) Chicago public schools, more than 80 percent of the students are from low-income backgrounds. Very few Chicago public schools have low poverty levels. In only 1 percent of Chicago's public schools are less than 20 percent of their students from low-income households. Overall, Chicago public schools are pictures of extreme isolation for minority and low-income students.

Figure 5 shows that the large majority of the Chicago public schools with high concentrations of minority students also have high concentrations of low-income students ($r=.71$).

Figure 4
Minority and Low-Income Distributions for Chicago Public Schools

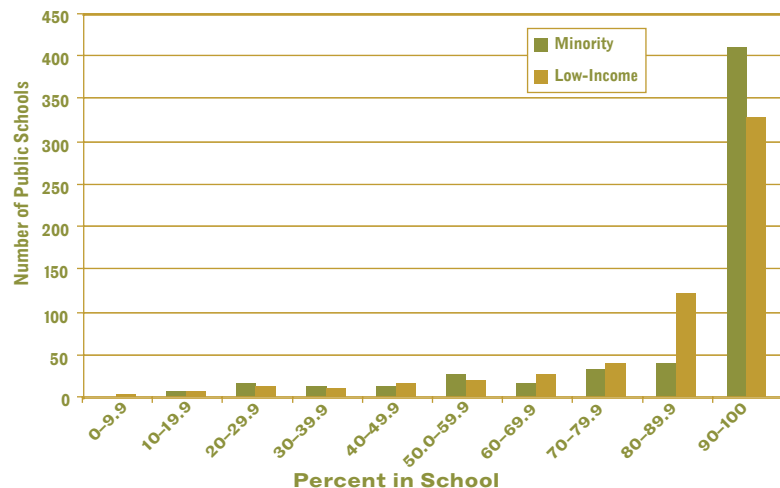


Figure 5
Low-Income by Minority for Chicago Public Schools

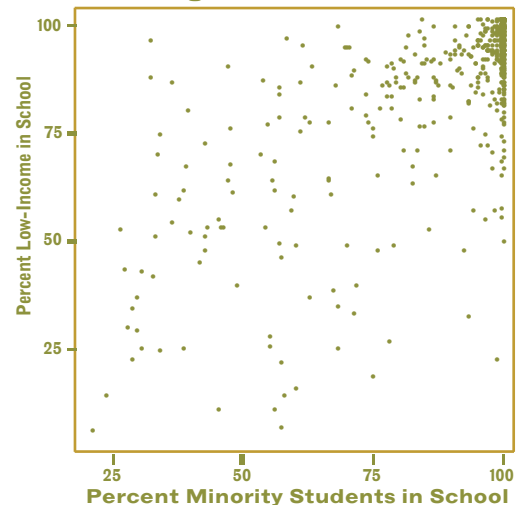
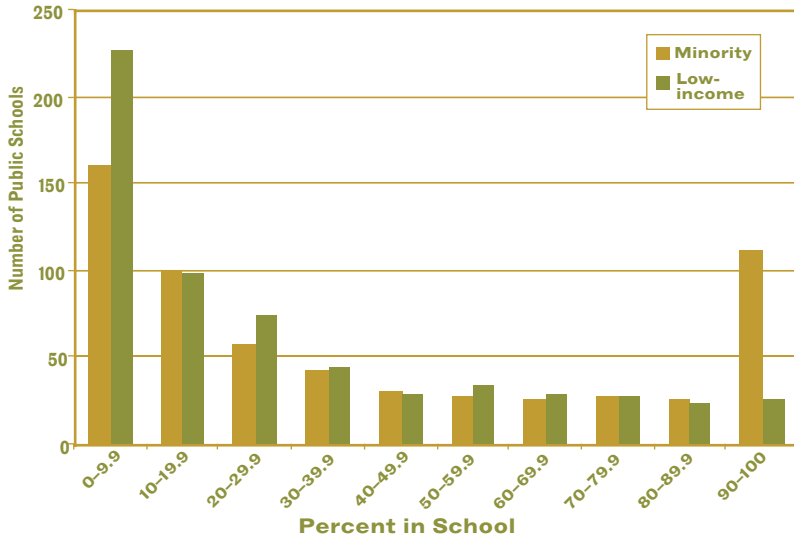


Figure 6
Minority and Low-Income Distributions for Suburban Cook County

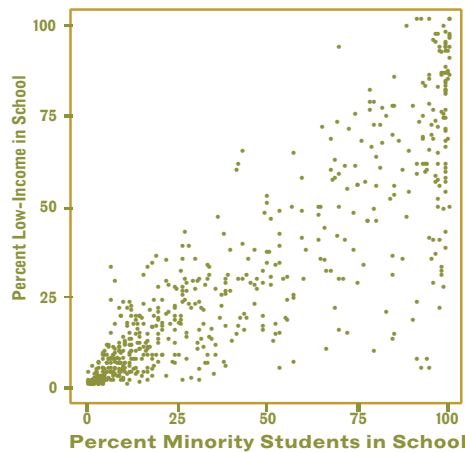


Suburban Cook County

The student population of suburban Cook County is substantially more diverse than that of Chicago in that there are many more White and Asian students in addition to African Americans and Latinos (Figure 3). However, Figure 6 shows a bimodal distribution in the racial composition of suburban Cook County schools. Almost half (45 percent) are extremely segregated, either having less than 10 percent minority students or 90 percent or more minority students. Very few schools have student populations that come close to reflecting the racial and ethnic composition of suburban Cook County (approximately 40 percent minority).

In marked contrast to the Chicago public school system, suburban Cook County has a small percentage of high-poverty schools. Only 5 percent have poverty concentrations of 90 percent or more, whereas more than half (53 percent) have poverty rates below 20 percent (Figure 6).

Figure 7
Low-Income by Minority for Suburban Cook County

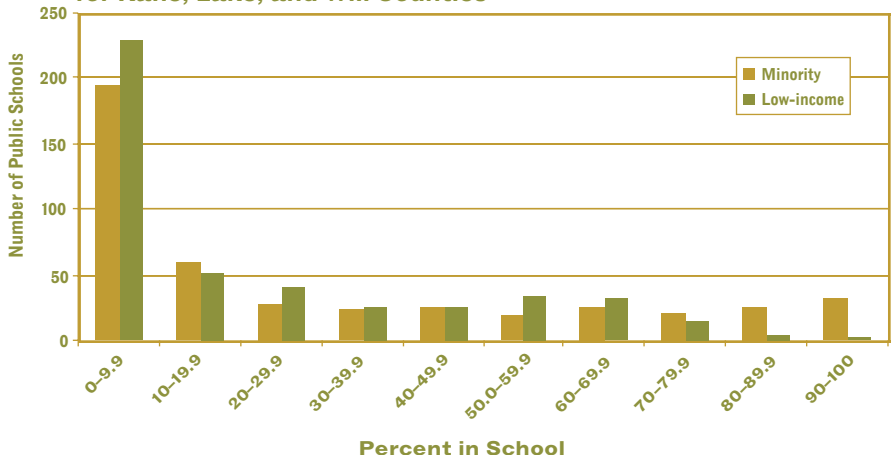


Nonetheless, there is a strong relationship between minority enrollment and poverty. As Figure 7 shows, there is no suburban Cook County school in which at least three-quarters of the students are nonminority that also has a poverty concentration of 50 percent or more. Although there are some schools that have high concentrations of minority students with low poverty rates, the correlation between minority enrollment and poverty concentration is extremely high ($r = .86$), even higher than that of the Chicago public schools ($r = .71$).

Kane, Lake, and Will Counties

Kane, Lake, and Will counties are similar to each other in their student racial demographics (Figure 3) and are examined together for that reason. Although the student population of these counties is quite diverse, nearly 60 percent of schools are intensely segregated; 43 percent of schools enroll fewer than 10 percent minority students; whereas 13 percent have enrollments that are 80 percent or more minority (Figure 8).

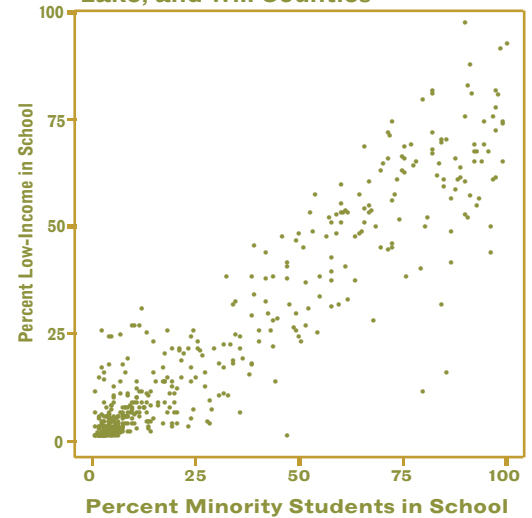
Figure 8
Minority and Low-Income Distributions for Kane, Lake, and Will Counties



As in suburban Cook County, half of the public schools in Kane, Lake, and Will have very low poverty rates (0–9.9 percent) and three out of five (61 percent) have less than 20 percent in poverty. Only two percent have poverty concentrations of 80 percent or more. As a whole, schools in Kane, Lake, and Will counties do not have the challenge of educating large numbers of students in high-poverty schools, as do the public schools of Chicago.

Nevertheless, Figure 9 illustrates the strong correlation between minority enrollment and poverty. The nearly linear relationship between racial and poverty concentrations indicates that as the percentage of minority students increases, so does the percentage of low-income students. The public schools of Kane, Lake, and Will counties have the strongest correlation between minority enrollment and poverty of any of the jurisdictions examined ($r = .93$).

Figure 9
Low-Income by Minority for Kane, Lake, and Will Counties



DuPage and McHenry Counties

Because fewer than 20 percent of students in both DuPage and McHenry counties are minorities, it is not surprising that almost half (49 percent) of their public schools have less than 10 percent minority enrollment and more than three-quarters have less than 20 percent (Figure 10). Only 4 percent of schools in the two counties have at least 60 percent minority enrollment.

The public schools in DuPage and McHenry counties also have the lowest concentrations of low-income students. More than 70 percent of their schools have poverty concentrations of less than 10 percent (Figure 11), and nearly 90 percent of schools have poverty concentrations below 20 percent. There are no schools in DuPage or McHenry counties that have poverty concentrations of 70 percent or more—a situation that is quite literally the opposite of the Chicago public schools.

Despite the small number of high-poverty schools in DuPage and McHenry counties, there still exists a strong relationship between low-income and minority enrollment ($r = .75$). As the percentage of minority students increases, the concentration of low-income students typically increases as well (Figure 11).

Figure 10
Minority and Low-Income Distributions for DuPage and McHenry Counties

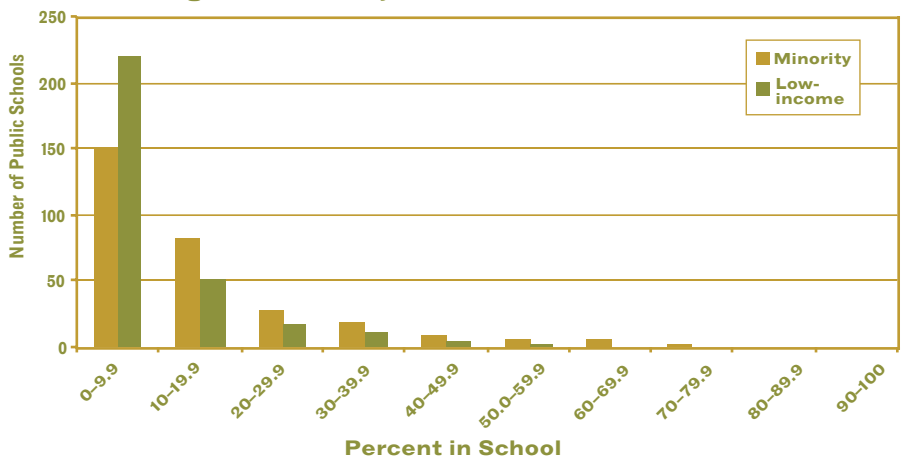
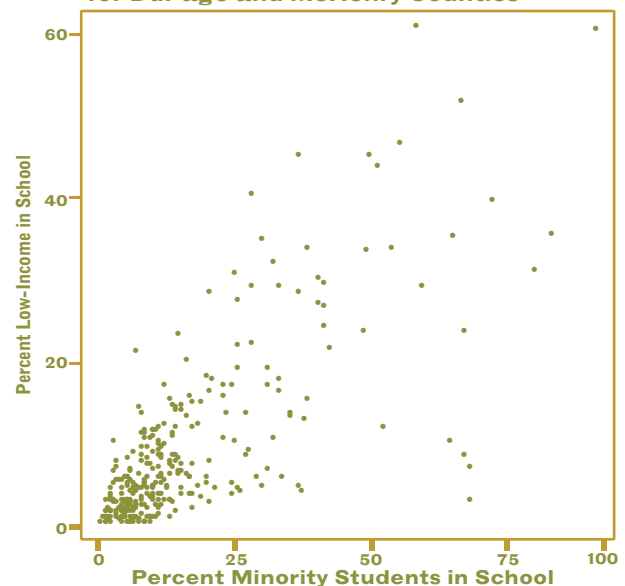


Figure 11
Low-Income by Minority for DuPage and McHenry Counties



School Segregation by Race and Poverty in Metropolitan Chicago: Implications

This brief has demonstrated that, in both urban and suburban schools throughout metropolitan Chicago, as a school's concentration of minority students increases, so does the concentration of low-income students. Low-income minority students continue to be concentrated in the Chicago public schools. But, as demonstrated in a previous edition of *Latino Research @ ND*,²¹ Chicago's suburbs are rapidly becoming more diverse. Many of the schools in the Chicago suburbs, like suburban schools in other parts of the country, are increasingly replicating patterns of segregation by race and class within their counties.²²

Studies now show that reform initiatives can improve outcomes for students in high-poverty schools.²³ However, the probability of dramatically improving student achievement for low-income students is greater in integrated schools.²⁴ As the minority population increases in suburbs that previously were nearly all White, policymakers should seriously consider strategies to establish and maintain schools that are integrated by class. In so doing, they are likely to enhance not only student achievement but interracial interaction and understanding as well.

21 Martha Zurita, "Latino Population in Illinois and Metropolitan Chicago: Young and Growing Fast!" *Latino Research @ ND* #1 (Institute for Latino Studies, University of Notre Dame, 2003) www.nd.edu/~latino.

22 Erika Frankenburg and Chungmei Lee, "Race in American Public Schools: Rapidly Resegregating School Districts," the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, 2002, at http://www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/deseg/reseg_schools02.php.

23 See studies compiled by the Center for Research on Students Placed at Risk, Howard and Johns Hopkins Universities, at <http://www.csos.jhu.edu/crespar/>.

24 See Puma et al. and Ludwig Kems, Greg Duncan, and Helen Ladd, "The Effects of MTO on Baltimore Children's Educational Outcomes," *Poverty Research News* V (1, 2001): 13–15.

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