



## CRAFTING A POLICY AGENDA FOR 2019 AND BEYOND

Across the nation, there are numerous examples of states and local communities engaging in thoughtful discussion, planning, design, and implementation of policies and programs to reduce racial and poverty concentration and achieve meaningful integration in elementary and secondary schools. While some of this work was initially motivated by court-ordered desegregation following findings of unlawful discrimination, much of the modern school integration movement is being led by students, parents, educators, and community members who understand—and want to disrupt—the relationship between segregation and structural educational inequality. Their visions of integration are broad, bold, and multi-faceted.

The passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015 gave rise to a policy environment that actively encourages educators to design and implement educational reform strategies that are tailored to their unique context, developed in consultation with parents, students, and community leaders. ESSA invited states, districts, and school communities to take the time and create the space to tackle some of their most vexing educational challenges.

Alongside this emerging flexibility, we have also witnessed an unfortunate retreat from school integration at the federal level in the Trump Administration. This has included removing racial and socioeconomic diversity as priorities in Department of Education competitive grant programs, cancelling a school integration grant program after school districts had already applied, and withdrawing guidance to school districts issued during the Obama Administration that provided a roadmap for school districts to lawfully consider race in student assignment.

*Courageous and visionary leaders tackling school segregation deserve the support of federal, state, and local leadership as they endeavor to create educational systems that are truly designed to meet the needs of all students.*

**WORK IN  
PROGRESS**

The ideas outlined in this document are the result of a months-long process of engaging some of the integration movement's most visionary and pragmatic leaders and thinkers, many of whom are grappling with these issues on a day-to-day basis in schools and community-based settings. We offer these strategies for consideration during federal, state, and local deliberations about how to shape our future educational systems.

*We welcome your thoughts and ideas.*

# FEDERAL LEVEL

There are a variety of ways to pursue racial integration in elementary and secondary schools, which can be broken down into three buckets: 1) use of funds; 2) planning; and 3) enforcement and data collection.



## USE OF FUNDS

### *Legislative*

- Recalibrate the Title I funding formula so it does not penalize school districts or schools that seek to pursue integration
- Create a federal grant program that provides financial support for districts seeking to integrate schools and helps disseminate best practices (such as the Stronger Together program that was introduced in the 114th Congress). Encourage multi-party collaboration and strong eligibility criteria in formulating such grant competitions
- Provide transportation grants for voluntary, interdistrict transportation programs
- Strike provisions in federal appropriations legislation and Section 426 of the General Education Provisions Act that prohibit federal funds from being used for transportation for racial integration
- Provide incentives to build schools in locations that foster diversity in all infrastructure bills that provide funding for schools
- Create a combined Choice Neighborhoods/Magnet School Assistance Program demonstration grant program that combines public housing redevelopment with expansion and conversion of local schools into regional magnet schools
- Increase funding for equity assistance centers to assist school districts and charter schools seeking to integrate

### *Regulatory*

- Reinstate priorities for socioeconomic and racial diversity for competitive grant programs in the Department of Education, which were in place during the Obama Administration
- Reinstate 2011 guidance letters that explained how school districts could lawfully pursue racial diversity
- Revise charter school grant program requirements. Currently, charter schools are required to serve at least 60% low-income students to be eligible for federal charter school grants. Lowering the threshold to 50% will further diversity while still supporting low-income students
- Loosen unnecessary legal restrictions to permit Head Start participants to learn together with students from higher income families in qualified preschool settings



## PLANNING

### *Regulatory*

- Create regional planning bodies, or empower existing bodies, that review regional educational needs; evaluate existing educational infrastructure; and provide a holistic review of a region's educational system, including racial and socioeconomic segregation and inequality



## ENFORCEMENT & DATA COLLECTION

### *Regulatory*

- Ensure that the Civil Rights Data Collection accurately tracks which districts and schools are employing integration strategies, e.g. magnet programs, controlled choice student assignment policies, etc.
- Require states to conduct a thorough inventory of all current and historic desegregation orders in their state. Review will include compiling a list of desegregation measures that have been implemented in the jurisdiction

*In the years ahead, we must establish and strengthen consistent support for school integration at federal, state, and local levels.*



# STATE LEVEL



## USE OF FUNDS

### *Regulatory*

- Create a statewide grant competition that awards funds to districts or schools that are seeking to reduce racial segregation and concentrations of affluence/poverty. Examples can be found in the federal Technical Assistance for Student Assignment Plans program, Magnet School Assistance Program, or the New York State school integration grants program



## PLANNING

### *Regulatory*

- Pass legislation that permits charter schools to conduct weighted lotteries that foster integration and that permit schools to draw from outside school district boundaries



## ENFORCEMENT & DATA COLLECTION

### *Legislative*

- Pass legislation prohibiting segregation in and between schools. The legislation should also affirm the state's interest in providing all children a nondiscriminatory educational experience
- When designing reporting measures related to integration, English Learner (EL) status should be included as part of any metrics, including the degree to which EL students are mainstreamed in the general education classroom
- Require Diversity Impact Assessments for districts (or parts of districts) that attempt to secede from larger districts
- Create a threshold level of diversity in each school district so that schools that meet this threshold are not subject to student reassignment
- Require any new school that is projected to further isolation of any racial group past a defined threshold (e.g. +/- 20% or more) to submit a recruitment and retention plan that is approved by the State Department of Education. Context must be considered in setting reasonable thresholds and in determining the appropriate geographic area to be used. A district-wide approach may be appropriate and sufficient in some circumstances, whereas in others a regional approach is most relevant

### *Regulatory*

- Build the degree of racial isolation or integration into the rating system of schools or districts as part of accountability measures