

Study shows Jim Crow-era segregation persists in Texas schools

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A first-of-its-kind study from researchers in the College of Education at The University of Texas at Austin shows that, in addition to being isolated by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status, English language learners in Texas schools also are separated by language, suffering what has been termed "triple segregation."

Education professors Julian Vasquez Heilig and Jennifer Jellison Holme analyzed [school](#)-level Texas Education Agency (TEA) data to determine the level of [school segregation](#) experienced by the rapidly growing English Language Learner (ELL) population in Texas, which is now the second largest in the nation. They were also interested in the relationship between levels of [segregation](#) and the performance of schools on the state accountability system.

Despite a 20-year-old accountability system that was designed to promote equality, the researchers found the majority of Texas ELL students remain in high poverty, high minority schools that are rated as low performing on the state accountability system.

"Our research revealed that schools where students are segregated by race/ethnicity, SES and language are overwhelmingly rated as low-performing," said Heilig, associate professor in the Department of Educational Administration.

Those schools also are staffed with some of the lowest-skilled teachers, and teacher and principal turnover tends to be high, Heilig said.

"So, 50 years after the Brown v. Board of Education ruling, the data reveals that very little has actually changed when it comes to the segregation of African Americans and Latinos in our schools," said Heilig. "Despite rhetoric to the contrary, demographics are still determining destiny in Texas."

According to the TEA data that Heilig and Holme analyzed:

- 51 percent of Texas schools are majority African American and Latino combined.
- 46 percent of [urban schools](#) are designated as "intensely segregated," which means that 90 percent or more of the students are African American and Latino combined.
- 47 percent of suburban Texas schools are now majority African American and Latino.
- 20 percent of suburban schools qualify as "intensely segregated."
- 15 percent of schools that are majority economically disadvantaged are also majority ELL.
- Of majority ELL schools, 89 percent are also majority economically disadvantaged.
- Two-thirds of the schools that are intensely poor—"vast majority" economically disadvantaged—are also majority ELL.
- In triple segregated schools, majority African American and Latina/o schools are 48 percent less likely to be rated "exemplary."

"This data analysis should be considered a starting point for further inquiry," said Heilig. "Ideally, other researchers will use it to launch their own studies of segregation in other states. In the past decade, the Deep South has experienced the largest increase in the nation of ELL students and is facing many of the same challenges as Texas and California."

"Nearly 50 Years Post-Jim Crow: Persisting and Expansive School

Segregation for African American, Latina/o and ELL Students in Texas" was published in *Education and Urban Society* in May.

Provided by University of Texas at Austin

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