

Separate but unequal: NYU Metro Center Report examines segregation in NYC schools

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A new report by the Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools at New York University (NYU Metro Center) explores patterns of segregation in New York City public schools and finds a link between increased school diversity and modest academic benefits.

The report compares student outcomes in New York City's most diverse (i.e., "non-segregated") and least diverse (i.e., "segregated") schools using 2015-16 achievement and graduation data.

"While there is evidence that supports increasing school [diversity](#), the data regarding the benefits of school diversity in New York City are complex," said David E. Kirkland, executive director of the NYU Metro Center and the report's lead author. "In many cases, the benefits associated with attending the City's most diverse schools were not equally shared across student groups."

Despite the diversity of New York City's population, many of its schools are racially segregated. In June, the New York City Department of Education released a plan to stimulate diversity in its schools. In this report, the NYU Metro Center examined whether achieving the goals outlined in the plan and increasing school diversity would lead to better outcomes for the City's most vulnerable students.

For the purposes of the report, the researchers classified the most diverse (non-segregated) schools in New York City as serving a student

population that is highly racially representative, between 50 and 75 percent Black and Latino. The least diverse schools, or segregated schools, were classified as those with a student population between 76 to 100 percent Black and Latino or more than 50 percent White and either very high or very low economic needs.

Using these criteria, 109 schools were identified as the City's most diverse schools, while 839 met the criteria for the City's least diverse schools. Of the least diverse schools, 117 had a student population that was more than 50 percent White. In total, 96,444 students - or 9.1 percent of all New York City students - attended the City's most diverse schools, and 515,032 students - or 39.3 percent of students - attended the City's least diverse schools.

The researchers found that diversity in New York City schools appears to be regional, with the most diverse, non-segregated schools concentrated significantly in Queens. In addition, Black students were the most likely to attend the City's least diverse schools, comprising one-third of the population of these segregated schools, but only 19.3 percent of students attending the most diverse schools.

Analysis of 2015-16 achievement data suggests that there is a modest benefit for vulnerable students attending the City's most diverse schools. Third and eighth grade students attending the most diverse schools modestly outperformed students attending the City's least diverse schools on state standardized tests in both English and math.

In addition, students attending the most diverse high schools were slightly more likely to graduate on-time than their peers attending the least diverse schools (68.8 percent versus 66.5 percent); less economically advantaged students in particular seemed to benefit from attending the most diverse high schools. By contrast, White, Asian, and more economically advantaged students were much more likely to

graduate in four years in the City's least diverse schools than their peers.

"White and Asian students seem to benefit incongruently from segregated schooling, which means that school segregation may give some students an unfair and seemingly unhealthy advantage - thus, sanctioning uneven opportunities for success," said Kirkland.

The analysis also suggests that younger students, as a whole, do not reap large benefits from attending the City's most diverse schools, but older students do - providing evidence of the long-term benefits of school diversity.

"The academic achievement and high school graduation evidence that we analyzed suggests that increasing diversity can increase equity in New York City schools and significantly decrease gaps in some student outcomes such as high [school](#) graduation," Kirkland concluded. "Thus, plans to stimulate diversity in New York City schools can pay off for the City's most vulnerable students."

The report includes recommendations for stimulating diversity, expanding opportunity, and interrupting segregation in New York City schools, including challenging "opportunity monopolies," such as specialized high schools, that only provide privileges to certain groups of students. The researchers also recommend recruiting and retaining teachers of color and hiring from the beginning culturally competent educators.

Provided by New York University

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