

# Prologue

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## Introduction

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This important volume brings together leading thinkers committed to advancing equity agendas through efforts of desegregation and integration. To understand the purpose behind this collection of essays, it helps to look to its title: *Integration and Equity 2.0*.

Consider first the choice of the word "integration," as opposed to "desegregation." Whereas the latter term is undeniably historical—referring to the court-ordered dismantling of Jim Crow and the separate-but-equal doctrine—the former suggests something deeper. That is, integration suggests more than simply forming a community of students of diverse backgrounds within the same schools; it advances the idea that students from different backgrounds have access to or benefit from supportive systems, practices, policies, resources, and overall conditions in those schools.

The inclusion of "and equity" in the title appears to challenge us to go further still—to explore a world in which racial or socioeconomic diversity in schools is pursued not merely for its own sake but in service of a more holistic and moral "apparatus" or ecosystem that fosters parity of opportunity and outcomes.<sup>1</sup> Equity also moves beyond the historical framing of desegregation efforts that focused on equality (sameness); *equity* (justice) has a community-responsive dimension based on the assets and challenges of those within a social context. That is, equity demands a concentrated effort on the codesign and codevelopment of mechanisms that are not necessarily equally distributed but are allocated based on what is necessary for communities to thrive. Thus, equity focuses on ensuring that marginalized and minoritized students do more than simply survive.<sup>2</sup>

And what are we to make of "2.0"? The numeral-plus-decimal seems to ground us not in some bygone era but in the here and now—the digital age, an age of constantly updating software programs and mobile phones. What's more, 2.0 presupposes the existence of a 1.0: a prior chapter, a past (perhaps outdated or ultimately unsuccessful) effort at school integration, equity, or, at least, desegregation. The very mention of 2.0

prods us, subtly but insistently, to reboot, to seek a new version, a fresh start, revising what we have come to learn from 1.0.

## Why We Need a Fresh Start: Assessing the History and Current State of Integration Efforts

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Do we need a version 2.0 strategy for pursuing and pressing toward integration and equity? The answer may be self-evident; with our own eyes, we can see who, by race or income level, attends what kind of public school today. A more definitive answer, however, is readily apparent from the briefest scan of relevant data, law, and studies on the impact of race and poverty on teaching, learning, and human development.

The most obvious data reveal a resounding lack of success at desegregation: Nearly 70 years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, students in pre-K–12 schools remain highly segregated by race and economic status, which has contributed to deeply unequal, inequitable, and unjust opportunities and outcomes.<sup>3,4</sup> We know that schools attended by predominately white students receive \$23 billion more than those attended by mostly students of color.<sup>5,6</sup> Today, two of five Black and Latinx students attend schools where more than 90% of their classmates are non-white (see Potter et al., Chapter 5.3). But we are not pushing for a resurrection of efforts at desegregation and integration solely for the sake of more resources or racially and socioeconomically diverse students in schools. Rather, we hope this volume sheds light on how integration can be a vehicle for a democracy that is just, humanizing, and liberating, as young people realize what Walker described as their highest potential.<sup>7</sup>

Racial segregation and economic segregation often overlap in pre-K–12 public schools. Black and Latinx students, on average, attend schools with a far higher share of students living in poverty. Twenty-eight percent of Black children and 19% of Latinx children are living in areas of concentrated poverty, compared to 6% of Asian American children and just 4% of white students.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, racial and economic segregation in schools has worsened considerably since the 1980s. The share of schools enrolling at least 90% non-white students had more than tripled from 5.7% in 1988 to 18.2% in 2016.<sup>9</sup> All of the desegregation gains in the South achieved since 1967 in the years following *Brown v. Board* have been wiped out,<sup>10</sup> and segregation in the South may be accelerating due to district secessions.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, considerable achievement gaps in math and reading between white

students and Black and Latinx students have remained constant or have widened.<sup>12,13</sup> These trends demonstrate how the country's goal of desegregation and integration has failed dramatically and seems to be worsening over time. Indeed, as political polarization intensifies by race, we suggest that this volume become a tool for thinking about how integration can play a role in helping to mitigate what Milner has discussed as a race war within nation-states.<sup>14</sup>

Much like school segregation, residential segregation has remained entrenched in U.S. communities: Out of every metropolitan region in the United States with more than 200,000 residents, 81% were more segregated in 2019 than they were in 1990. It has been noted that,

unlike school desegregation, the nation never embarked on a national project to integrate neighborhoods, let alone declared an unambiguous commitment to that goal. There has never been a *Brown v. Board of Education*-like decision for housing, mandating a deliberate, proactive effort to integrate neighborhoods.<sup>15</sup>

The ability of education leaders and policymakers to use the law to foster school desegregation and student diversity has been hampered over the last 50 years. The impact of this cannot be overstated. Consider that the highpoint of synergistic interplay between law and desegregation occurred somewhere between 1968 and 1971, when the U.S. Supreme Court stated that schools had an "affirmative duty" to eliminate the vestiges of segregation "root and branch" and gave federal courts wide latitude in fashioning remedies to eliminate racial segregation.<sup>16</sup> During that same time period, the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare filed more than 600 administrative proceedings against segregated school districts and cut off funding to 200 schools for noncompliance, and the U.S. Department of Justice initiated more than 500 school desegregation lawsuits.<sup>17</sup>

Beginning in the mid-1970s, however, the Supreme Court issued a string of rulings narrowing the scope and duration of judicial and government oversight over schools' desegregation efforts; that oversight has dwindled to a bare whisper today. Then, in 2007, the Supreme Court declared that pre-K–12 student assignment plans designed to increase racial diversity were nothing short of unconstitutional "racial balancing," thereby ushering in an era in which it is no longer clear whether federal law serves as aid or impediment in the struggle to desegregate.<sup>18</sup> Most recently, the court outlawed

consideration of students' race in higher education admissions programs.<sup>19</sup> Although there is no immediate impact on pre-K–12 programs, the decision augurs the further narrowing of strategies available to integrate pre-K–12 schools.

Finally, we must confront how prior attempts at desegregation failed children themselves. Desegregation efforts almost always meant that Black students were bused outside their neighborhood to school. While this was beneficial in some ways, research is clear that it harmed the educational experiences of some Black children.<sup>20,21,22,23</sup> For instance, approximately 38,000 Black teachers and administrators lost their positions between 1954 and 1965.<sup>24,25</sup> Research shows that, even if Black educators were not in fact dismissed, they were demoted or forced to transfer. For Black students, access to Black teachers is not arbitrary or inconsequential. Research shows the enormous benefits of Black students having Black instructors, because, with Black students, these teachers can co-construct curricular, instructional, assessment, and relational practices that are highly advantageous.<sup>26</sup>

Mindful of such research, the authors in this volume address pressing and enduring issues that might help us reach a form of integration and equity that honors the humanity and brilliance of young people across difference and moves us beyond previous frameworks for desegregation that were highly problematic for too many in Black communities. Our aims must not focus on integration simply for the sake of racially and otherwise mixed students in schools. What this volume offers is a way of thinking about integration and educational equity as an imperative that *rights the wrongs* of failed desegregation efforts that had disrupted structural and systemic assets benefiting Black children.

## **Themes and Ideas Represented in *Integration and Equity 2.0***

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The authors in this volume do not represent the complete spectrum of ideas or voices, including those from many of the diverse communities most impacted by school segregation and racial isolation. Perhaps no publication could achieve this. But they do represent some of those voices—and a range of approaches to school integration that can jumpstart community conversations. They consider research, advocacy, policy, and practice. They elevate both new and under-explored strategies. They address interrelated and intersecting challenges concerning housing and transportation, law, politics and policy, school funding, and student- and community-related dynamics and

needs. And they showcase collaborative possibilities across diverse sectors, both governmental and nongovernmental.

In **Part 1**, contributors explore the federal role in promoting school integration. The modest scale of federal coordination and support for integration in states and districts, particularly considering the developments highlighted above, is noteworthy.

In "Adapting to Adaptive Discrimination in Educational Policy," the authors highlight the need for more robust federal involvement by demonstrating how "race-evasive legislation" is a direct reaction to growing progress and diversity in the United States. The authors call for the federal government to work with civil rights organizations, researchers, professional associations, philanthropies, and youth organizations to address historical inequities and persistent structures that have perpetuated harm over time—and to engage in antidiscrimination, equity-oriented, and race-conscious efforts designed to create learning environments where all students thrive. In "Deliberate Speed: Creating the Conditions for Voluntary School Integration," the author proposes a new federal program that would incentivize schools to foster greater diversity by increasing their funding as their enrollment demographics more closely resemble those of the surrounding region. In "Prioritizing School Integration in the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) Process" and "Supporting School Integration Through the Federal Housing Choice Voucher Program," the authors highlight the potential of the federal government, at long last, to breathe new life into the goal of aligning education, housing, and transportation policy to address the intertwined realities of school and neighborhood segregation. Whether through regulatory reform, sophisticated "data mapping," or expansion of "housing mobility" programs, the authors show how the federal government is uniquely positioned to remedy generations of pernicious redlining, discrimination, and hostility toward community diversity.

In **Part 2**, contributors focus on state-based advocacy efforts. State and local governments, after all, provide about 92% of funding to schools and are responsible for nearly all the decisions around curriculum, supports, and initiatives related to fostering diversity and inclusion, and student assignments to particular districts or schools.

In "Fulfilling Brown's Promise: Integrated, Well-Resourced Schools That Prepare All Students to Succeed," the authors call for a new wave of state-specific advocacy campaigns in research, communications, litigation, and advocacy that bridge the chasm

between school finance and integration. The authors of "A Multidimensional Approach to School Diversity in New Jersey and Beyond" continue this theme, lifting up New Jersey as a laboratory for legal and policy steps that would address the state's twin obligations to provide well-resourced and racially diverse schools. The authors recommend pursuing actions such as revamping the state's voluntary interdistrict school choice program, enforcing laws intended to foster both school and housing integration, and advancing "integration-informed" school funding policies.

In **Part 3**, contributors focus on community approaches and perspectives, including those left out of research-, legal-, and policy-oriented briefs, papers, and discussions related to integration and equity. Researchers have opined for years how research and policy must center and be codeveloped with the subjects and systems most affected by the focus of that research or policy.<sup>27</sup> If there is a topic more in need of community participatory involvement in research or policy than school integration, we can't think of one. Moreover, contributors to this part caution against efforts to move beyond consideration of race or racism in research, legal, and policy efforts to integrate schools—in and of itself a remarkable goal, considering the origin story behind (and continuing headwinds against) these efforts.

In the essay "School Integration Approaches Beyond the White Gaze: Centering Black, Latin\*, Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA), and Indigenous Youth," the authors describe how Minnesota's school integration initiatives tend to be designed and juxtaposed with their proximity to whiteness and overlook how "Black, Latin\*, Asian Pacific Islander Desi American, and Indigenous youth already integrate their spaces." Disrupting the "white gaze," a term popularized by Toni Morrison, the authors outline their plan to study how young people in Minneapolis define and co-create policies and practices of integration. In "Racially Just School Integration: A 21st Century, Student-Led Strategy," the author underscores the importance of community and youth engagement to foster "racially just" school integration policies and strategies—including a student-led strategy focused on the "5 R's of Real Integration": **r**ace, class, and enrollment; **r**esources; **r**elationships; **r**epresentation; and **r**estorative justice. In "School Rezoning: Essential Practices to Promote Integration and Equity," the authors point out how school board members are too often unprepared to engage in deep discourse regarding race, racism, and equitable community inputs. They stress how "growth in the use of rezoning as a lever to reduce segregation will take partnership, support and a commitment to continuous improvement." And perhaps more than any other contribution in this

volume, "Fostering More Integrated Schools Through Community-Driven, Machine-Informed Rezoning" demonstrates the potential for new, 21st century strategies to address centuries-old problems. The authors explore how researchers and school districts can harness artificial intelligence to develop and evaluate new community-driven, machine-guided programs to redraw school attendance boundaries in ways that could reduce segregation while also reducing travel times for students.

In **Part 4**, contributors explore the design and evaluation of learning pathways to promote integration. As scholar Rucker Johnson has explained, research "points incontrovertibly to three powerful cures to unequal educational opportunity: (1) integration, (2) equitable school funding, and (3) *high-quality preschool investments*."<sup>28</sup>

Taking Johnson's third cure to heart, "Integration at the Start: Designing Pre-K Choice and Enrollment Systems to Promote Equity and Excellence" highlights strategies involving the use of data systems, research, and collaboration to promote integration in pre-K programs and provide parents with better information on and access to high-quality, integrated programs. And "How Expanding Transitional Kindergarten in California Can Promote Integration" identifies a unique opportunity to help guide the expansion of California's transitional prekindergarten program in ways that could influence the racial and economic make-up of both these programs and surrounding schools.

Another learning pathway explored in this part involves programs that foster learning and development among students and families whose first language is not English. As districts and schools meet the needs of young people who represent nearly 400 different languages in U.S. schools, programs deliberately designed to focus on equitable practices are necessary. In "Integration and Immersion: The Potential of Two-Way Dual Language Programs to Foster Integration," the authors offer dual language immersion programs as a strategy to address not only the historical racial and socioeconomic segregation between white and Black students, but also the segregation between multilingual learners and native-English-speaking students within schools.

In **Part 5**, contributors offer collaborative, cross-sector approaches to achieving educational equity. Too often, experts across disparate sectors—including legal/civil rights, research, government, advocacy, and school governance—have worked on their

own, instead of collaboratively or in tandem, to address school integration. There has also been limited collaboration among experts across sectors (including education, housing and urban development, transportation, and commerce) to address segregation in communities and regions. Forums to address this problem have been infrequent, a closed loop within narrow academic or policy circles, and have failed to generate sustained dialogue or momentum. Yet research evidence suggests that successful policymaking—from policy formation to implementation and practice—requires varied and sustained coalitions.<sup>29</sup>

To counter these dynamics, the authors of "Community Development for Integrated Schools: The Detroit Choice Neighborhoods Initiative" highlight community development as an under-explored pathway to integrated neighborhoods, social networks, and schools. They propose to study a Detroit-centered, place-based school integration "intervention" that combines education and housing strategies with a greater neighborhood investment plan, which could foster greater racial and socioeconomic diversity in pre-K–12 centers and schools in and around Detroit's Corktown neighborhood. In "Stories of School Travel: Using a Mobility Justice Framework for Desegregation Research and Policy," the authors' aim is to reconnect not only transportation but also issues of "neighborhood change, housing and land use, commercial development, policing, arts and culture" to the school desegregation discourse. In emphasizing the need to understand and capture in real time how young people get to and from school, the authors stress the potential of a complex and multidimensional picture of "mobility justice." And in "Strength in Collaboration: How the Bridges Collaborative is Catalyzing School Integration Efforts," the authors describe an innovative, intentional, and welcome mashup of people and sectors: the Bridges Collaborative, a hub for education and housing practitioners to collaborate and build the "solidarity needed to tackle the vexing problem of segregation and chart a more integrated, inclusive future for students and families."

## Conclusion

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This volume presents a complex, nuanced, multilayered account of how integration might be pursued for equity and justice for all—especially those who are placed on the margins of opportunity structures in the United States, such as Black and Brown students, students who live below the poverty line, students whose first language is not English, students who are Muslim, immigrant students, and so forth.



There are those who point out that desegregation efforts did not well serve Black and other students of color. Researchers, policymakers, and advocates must heed their warning and ensure that integration agendas go beyond moving bodies between schools and districts to address the psychological, social, relational, and other factors associated with integration that affect students and families.

We are hopeful that this collection generates not only new research questions and possibilities, but new strategies for policymakers and practitioners who, drawing on the research, must work to improve the condition of schools in real time in their respective areas.

Taken together, as we press toward an integration and equity agenda that has sustainable, wide-reaching, and transformative effects, the authors in this volume recommend more research, practice, and policy efforts that address:

- Race-, poverty-, and language-conscious research, policies, and practices.
- Prekindergarten access and diversity.
- Housing mobility imperatives.
- School zoning and attendance boundary setting.
- School board composition and expertise.
- Integration-informed school funding policies.
- Student assignment policies and practices.
- Youth, community, and social networks and engagement.
- Transportation mechanisms and infrastructure.
- Use of technology to drive integration.

It does not escape us that we live in an era when threats to justice are at their peak—not only for individual students and educators, but for the entire public education sector and our democracy.<sup>30</sup> If we have a fighting chance at helping the communities most vulnerable to inequity and injustice, then we must carefully consider the ideas offered in this volume (and additional ones not considered here) and make concerted efforts to support them. We invite and urge readers to take the initiative to work within and across communities to design structures, systems, and institutions that cultivate integration, equity, and justice in our public schools.

## Notes

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