Boundaries of Diversity:
Shifting the Agenda for Student Assignment Policy and Why it Matters

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Student assignment policies (SAPs), which determine which students will attend which schools in their district, tend to be invisible bits of urban infrastructure until some event focuses attention on them. Historically, school desegregation and court supervision have been the most high-profile events that affect SAPs. More routinely, SAPs rise on local agendas when attendance zone boundaries are redrawn, or districts decide to change the extent to which families can choose schools. In 2009, the U.S. Department of Education made grants to eleven school districts through the Technical Assistance for Student Assignment Plans (TASAP) grant program. The goal of TASAP was for districts to pay consultants to help them redesign their SAPs in ways that would retain diverse enrollments as a priority without running afoul of new legal constraints created by a 2007 U.S. Supreme Court decision. In earlier research, we have analyzed the TASAP program and showed that very few grantees actually used their grants to increase or maintain diversity in their schools through their SAPs.

In this paper, we present four case studies of northern, urban TASAP grantees: Boston, Portland, Rockford (IL) and St. Paul. The case studies show how all four districts decided to reduce the geographic scope of school choice so that students would attend schools closer to where they live. None of the four districts’ new SAPs make diversity a priority. While the goals of enrollment stability and attracting more white students back into the district met with mixed success according to our analysis, in each district, enclave schools persisted and new enclaves formed after the SAP implementation. After presenting background information on student assignment policies and situating the paper in prior research, we move into the case studies. Each case study analyzes why the districts enacted these particular policies, as well as how the new
SAPs have affected overall levels of diversity of districts, racial segregation within districts, and the prevalence of “enclave schools” that enroll higher proportions of White students than their districts do.

**Student Assignment Policy From Integration to Parents Involved**

In the U.S., there are two basic approaches to student assignment policy. One approach is to assign students to schools based on where they live. This type of SAP is so familiar and common that many people never need to consider any other possibility. The other basic approach is to decouple where students live from which schools they attend, by offering multiple school choices within the same school district. Either of these can exist on its own. They can also be combined, as when a district mostly has neighborhood schools but also has a few “magnet” schools open to students who live anywhere in the district. Many US school districts now face increased external competition from interdistrict transfer options or charter schools.

School desegregation brought the connections between students’ homes and their school assignments into the foreground of political controversy. In a few cases, dismantling legally mandated segregation meant that students’ school assignments could be more closely related to where they lived. The lead plaintiff in *Brown v. Board of Education* was one such student. Linda Brown had traveled past a White segregated school every day on her way to the Black segregated school she attended. More frequently, especially in the North and West, ending state requirements for segregation did not produce integration, because students of different races lived in different neighborhoods, defined by years of overt and covert housing discrimination (Sugrue 2008; Rothstein 2017). In these places, court orders reassigned students away from their neighborhood schools so that schools could be integrated despite housing segregation.

Frequently, these reassignments increased the rate at which White families were leaving cities
for suburban school districts, particularly after the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1974 *Milliken v. Bradley* decision made it nearly impossible for desegregation orders to include suburban municipalities that had their own school districts.

In an effort to maintain some integration while staving off White flight, desegregation orders began to rely on school choice. Instead of busing students between what would otherwise have been neighborhood schools, districts would present families with choice among multiple schools and then maximize placement of students in schools they wanted to attend, subject to the constraint that all schools’ racial compositions had to remain similar to that of the district as a whole. Some controlled-choice SAPs completely eliminated neighborhood schools and attendance zones, and others retained attendance zones plus magnet schools. This approach to student assignment is called controlled choice (Orfield 2013a). In the years after *Brown*, federal courts identified diversity as a constitutionally compelling interest that could justify the use of racial classifications in student assignment.

Not all controlled-choice SAPs were court-ordered; some school districts adopted them voluntarily, and others retained them even after their court orders had ended. Magnet schools were a strategy for attracting White, middle-class families to move to, or stay in, urban public schools (Varady & Raffell 1995; Billingham 2013). Twentieth-century gentrifiers did not necessarily want their children to attend school with their neighbors, and citywide programs with a special curriculum focus provided an appealing alternative.

**The Parents Involved in Community Schools Decision and its Effects**

Controlled choice did not produce the same backlash as mandatory reassignments had, and often was quite popular. This is why school districts like Jefferson County (Louisville) Kentucky continued controlled choice after court supervision ended, and other districts like
Seattle adopted it without ever having been under a desegregation order. However, in any school-choice system, not everybody gets their first choice school, particularly when some schools have many more applicants than available seats. In some districts, disappointed controlled-choice participants sued, charging that they would have been able to attend their first-choice schools, but for their race. In 2007, the U.S Supreme Court’s ruling in Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District and Meredith v. Jefferson County Public Schools struck down Seattle’s and Jefferson County’s controlled-choice SAPs. In the decision, usually referred to as Parents Involved or PICS for short, five Justices agreed that the Seattle and Jefferson County policies were unconstitutional because some students’ school assignment depended upon their race, and the districts had not demonstrated that no race-neutral approach that would produce diverse schools. Four of these Justices joined in an opinion that all race-conscious SAPs were unconstitutional. The fifth, Justice Kennedy, found specific problems with Seattle’s and Jefferson County’s policies but wrote a concurring opinion in which he said that race-conscious student assignment policies could sometimes be constitutional if race was one of multiple factors considered and no race-neutral approach would work. Parents Involved applied only to districts that were not under court order to integrate their schools.

Many school district leaders wanted to retain race-conscious SAPs, and sought to change their policies so that they would meet Justice Kennedy’s criteria if a case reached the Supreme Court. However, it was unclear how to do this. The U.S. Department of Education (USED) released guidance in 2008 that encouraged school districts to remove any references to race from their SAPs, in effect ignoring the space that Kennedy’s concurrence seemed to have left open. Leaders of urban school districts nonetheless wanted to retain what they could of SAPs that were intended to promote racial diversity. Their national organization, the Council of Great City
Schools, worked with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and Congressional leadership to add $2.5 million to the Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2009 for the U.S. Department of Education’s Equity Assistance Centers. Congress directed that the funds be spent on grants to school districts that sought technical assistance for developing or implementing diversity-promoting SAPs that would be consistent with *Parents Involved*. Assistance could include either advice from experts on student assignment policy or facilitation of public engagement around policy change.

Eleven school districts\(^1\) received these Technical Assistance for Student Assignment Plans (TASAP) grants, awarded in 2009. USED released the funds to districts all at once, and did not monitor the districts to ensure that they were actually carrying out the projects their grant proposals had described (DeBray et al., 2015). TASAP’s overall effects were mixed. Five of the 11 grantees proposed to use the federal funds to refine or improve implementation of existing SAPs. Four of these executed their plans more or less as proposed to USED, and the fifth decided instead to seek release from its desegregation order and return unspent funds. The other 6 grantees sought funds to help enact new SAPs that would retain diversity goals. Of the 6, only 1 (Champaign, IL) actually did this. San Diego did not spend all of its TASAP funds or enact a new SAP. The other four districts—the cases in this paper—enacted new SAPs without diversity goals, all of which also sought to place students in schools closer to their homes (Frankenberg et al. 2015; DeBray et al. 2015).

Even though the Obama-administration USED and Department of Justice eventually released joint guidance that encouraged districts to continue with diversity-promoting SAPs within the limits of *Parents Involved*, this happened in December 2011 after most of the grantees were well along in their work. In the absence of pressure to the contrary from the federal

\(^1\) Boston, Champaign (IL), Evangeline Parish (LA), Hillsborough County (FL), Jefferson County (KY), Orange County (FL), Portland, Rockford, St. Paul, San Diego, San Francisco.
government, most TASAP grantees allowed diversity to fall off the agenda for SAP change. Austere budgets, state accountability policies, and the perennial appeal of neighborhood schools generated new policy priorities, such as reducing transportation spending, halting enrollment declines and the state budget cuts that came with them, and improving test scores. White and middle-class parents’ desire for something more like neighborhood schools was consistent with all of these other priorities. In effect, even though the district leadership of the TASAP grantees had approved proposals that expressed commitment to maintaining racial diversity and/or preventing resegregation through their SAPs, most of the districts experienced a resetting of their agendas once the proposals came in contact with local politics (McDermott et al. 2015; Frankenberg et al. 2015; DeBray et al. 2015).

**Literature Review**

Our analysis of how this happened is grounded in prior research on how the politics around school choice and diversity were changing, why neighborhood schools remained (or became newly) appealing to urban residents, and how powerful constituents shape policy agendas.

**The Changing Politics of Choice and Diversity**

Early court rulings in favor of desegregating K-12 schools and higher education emphasized equal treatment for Black students, as when the *Brown* ruling declared that separate schools are inherently unequal and the *Green* ruling called for an end to racially identifiable schools. After the 1978 *Bakke* case about university affirmative action, though, successful arguments for integration and/or diversity rested on the *Bakke* majority’s finding that diversity in schools and universities is a compelling governmental interest that can justify individually race-conscious policies. There is a broad research consensus that diverse schools benefit both students
of color and White students, which persist into adulthood (Mickelson & Nkomo, 2012).

Grounding arguments for affirmative action and integration in educational institutions’ need for diversity can help broaden the political constituency for such policies, and has been a successful strategy in court, but it has also decoupled diversity from equity or justice for historically disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups (McDermott, 2001; Warikoo 2016; Berrey 2015).

The Enduring Appeal of Neighborhood Schools

Demands for “neighborhood schools” have historically served as a more socially acceptable way of demanding White schools, or schools that do not have low-income or other marginalized kinds of students in them. Even acknowledging this history, “neighborhood schools” inspire sympathy because they connect with a common understanding of how public schools normally work. Although late 20th-century gentrifiers often sent their children to citywide magnets rather than neighborhood schools, this preference seems to be shifting. Contemporary gentrifiers are neighborhood-focused and view public schools as valuable neighborhood amenities (Cucchiara 2013; Stillman 2012). For some advantaged urban residents, sending their children to neighborhood schools reduces their sense that they are making a riskier decision than if they had moved to the suburbs (Kimelberg 2014). Specifically, even a relatively affluent urban neighborhood is likely to be more diverse than an affluent suburb, so urban White parents may not see any contradiction between neighborhood schools and diversity.

Agenda-Setting, Civic Capacity, and Enclave Schools

Our analysis of the politics of student assignment policy change is informed by theories of community power that emerged from critiques of pluralist understandings of urban politics. Scholars who elucidated what Lukes (1974) and Gaventa (1980) both characterize as the “second face of power” pointed out a key flaw in the pluralist view of power—that it does not pay
attention to how issues get defined and policy-making agendas are set (Schattschneider 1960). To understand political power, we need to analyze “non-decisions” (Bachrach & Baratz 1962) in which there is no visible public resolution of an issue because the issue never made it into the public domain. According to Crenson (1971), a powerful local interest like U.S. Steel in Gary, Indiana, does not even need to exercise its power if local residents view it as insurmountably powerful.

In local school governance, the district administration and the board of education are literally the agenda-setters because they control access to the agenda at board meetings. These agenda setters do not act in a vacuum, though. Elected board members consider voter responses to their potential actions or inactions. In cities where the mayor appoints the board of education, board members are insulated from short-term electoral pressure, but they may also have been appointed in the first place because they shared their appointer’s assumptions about which issues ought to be addressed, and how. These assumptions in turn are informed by the mayor’s understanding of who votes and who is in her electoral coalition.

Markets also influence local political agendas. In much of the U.S., metropolitan real-estate markets cross school-district boundaries because the school districts serve only a single city or town. If an urban school district acts in ways that its affluent residents do not approve of, these residents can move somewhere else without changing jobs. In many metropolitan areas, there are enough private and charter school options that it may also be possible for a family to remain in a city without keeping their children in its school district. Losing White and affluent public-school families has costs that are financial (declining property values and property-tax revenues, payments to charter schools), political (withdrawal of influential people’s support for public school spending), and reputational. Fairly or not, the presence of White and middle-class
children in a school or district indicates to White, middle-class parents that it is a high-quality option (Holme 2002). For all of these reasons, when urban residents use their political voices, the ability to exit if they do not get what they want gives some of them more power than others (Cucchiara 2013; Stillman 2012). Our analysis is also informed by Clarence Stone and his collaborators’ concept of “civic capacity,” the ability of a city to mobilize public and private resources to improve their public schools (Stone et al. 2001).

Henig et al.’s 1999 book on civic capacity in cities with Black majorities in their public schools and Black leadership in the schools and city government found that the White students who remained in these districts tended to be in “a relatively small number of ‘enclave’ schools,” which were significantly Whiter and more affluent than schools in the rest of the city (Henig et al. 1999 p. 198). They continued:

Parents in these enclave schools are extremely active and involved, but most of their energies are targeted at improving the relative position of their school versus others, rather than aiming for changes that might benefit the system at large (198).

Henig et al. go on to caution that parental participation in protecting or enhancing enclave schools can crowd out development of citywide civic capacity. The crowding-out begins because involvement in a single school often brings more immediate and visible results than participation in citywide efforts. Because everybody’s time and energy are finite, school-level involvement can impede development of citywide civic capacity by depriving it of resources, or even create a climate that pits schools against each other and blocks coalition-building. Cities with enclave schools also often have what we have labeled “default schools,” the lower-resourced and lower-performing ones that serve students who either did not get into other schools or have parents who did not try to get them into other schools (McDermott et al. 2015).
Although none of the TASAP grantee districts discussed in this paper were Black-majority or Black-led, White students were in the minority in three of the four. In Portland, the fourth, we will see that district leaders wanted to keep their atypical urban demographics. This makes the enclave-school concept useful for understanding why White and middle-class residents had disproportionate influence on school district agendas, and what they wanted those agendas to include or exclude.

**Research Methods**

This paper combines qualitative case studies of SAP change in Boston, Portland, Rockford, and St. Paul with quantitative analysis of the policies’ effects. The case studies draw on the districts’ TASAP proposals, relevant district documents, newspaper coverage, and interviews conducted in person or by telephone. The interviews were with school district officials and representatives of organizations that had been involved with SAP change. Boston interviews were conducted in 2010 and 2013 because there were two distinct waves of SAP change activity. Portland and St. Paul interviews were conducted in 2011. Rockford interviews were conducted in 2012 and 2013.

The quantitative analyses for Portland, Rockford, and St. Paul all use federal enrollment data from the National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data. Because of time constraints, the Boston analysis draws on a working paper that used Massachusetts state enrollment data (http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/reports/enroll/#; Francis, McDermott, & Ash 2018). The data for the three cases using NCES data begin in 2010-11 before implementation of a new SAP, and continue through 2017-18. We examine enrollment and segregation changes for only grades affected by the SAP (e.g., only high schools in Portland; elementary schools in Boston, etc.)
We use several measures, tied to measuring what we see as the goals of districts’ SAP changes. First, we examine enrollment change and changes in racial composition for affected grades. We are specifically looking to see whether enrollment increases in affected grades and for different racial/ethnic subgroups. Second, we use two commonly used measures of segregation to measure changes in how students are sorted among schools (Massey & Denton, 1988). We used the dissimilarity index to measure the evenness with which racial groups were distributed across schools in the district, looking specifically at black-white dissimilarity and Hispanic-white dissimilarity before and after implementation of the new SAPs. The dissimilarity index ranges from zero representing perfectly even distribution of two groups (e.g., integration) to one, which reflects complete separation or segregation of two groups. It is typically interpreted as a percentage indicated what proportion of one group would need to move (e.g., switch schools) to be evenly distributed. Between 0-.30 is considered low segregation, .30-.60 is considered moderate segregation, and greater than .60 is considered high segregation.

While the dissimilarity index helps us understand how evenly or not students are sorted into schools within a district, it tells us less about what type of school experiences and cross-racial contact students are having. To examine this dimension of segregation, we use the isolation index to assess the extent to which students are exposed to same-race students in their school. The isolation index is essentially a weighted average of the proportion of students from a particular racial/ethnic group in a student of a given race’s school. The isolation index also ranges from 0 to 1. If students were perfectly integrated, the isolation would be the same as that group’s share of overall enrollment. For interpretation, it is useful to compare to the focal group’s racial composition and to see how it changes over time. Again, both segregation measures are calculated only for the grade levels affected by the new SAPs.
The Process of Changing Student Assignment Policy

In this section, we present case studies of the politics of SAP change in four northern TASAP districts: Boston, Massachusetts; Portland, Oregon; Rockford, Illinois; and St. Paul, Minnesota. At the time their TASAP grants were awarded, White students were in the minority in all of these districts except Portland. The majority of students in Boston, Rockford, and St. Paul were eligible for free or reduced-price school meals.

[Insert Table 1 here]

Of the four case study districts, Rockford’s new SAP has the strongest links between housing and school assignment, because the district ended elementary school choice and returned to zoned (neighborhood) elementary schools. Boston adopted an algorithm for defining students’ school choice baskets, which makes proximity to home the strongest criterion. The section then moves on to Portland and St. Paul, both of which had previously used choice as part of voluntary diversity-promoting SAPs. Portland eliminated free transfers among its neighborhood high schools, closed one of them, and converted another to a magnet school. Along the way it also abandoned its TASAP goal of balancing the remaining high schools according to a multifactor diversity index. St. Paul broke its citywide K-12 choice SAP into 7 regions. This section begins with Rockford and Boston, the two districts that had previously been under desegregation orders.

Rockford

When the Rockford Public Schools submitted its TASAP proposal in 2009, the district was only 8 years removed from federally court-ordered integration. The proposal focused on developing a new student-assignment plan. Although the TASAP proposal suggested that diversity was a priority, it was unclear what kind of diversity the proposal’s authors had in mind. The city’s first superintendent of color, who began in her position while the proposal was in
development, wanted to address systematic racism in the district. However, she had already lost the Board of Education majority that appointed her by the time she arrived. In the end, none of the options that RPS put forward for public engagement included diversity targets, and the Board voted to return to zoned (neighborhood) schools.

**Prior history and TASAP proposal.** Rockford is divided into east and west sides by the Rock River. Historically, the west side has had lower-income residents and more families of color, and the east side has been higher-income and Whiter. For decades, the Rockford Public Schools (RPS) had neighborhood schools, which often were racially identifiable (Taylor & Alves, 1999; Welner, 2001). The 1994 *People Who Care* decision found that RPS had maintained segregation through gerrymandered attendance boundaries and academic tracking. The resulting remedial order gave west-side students the ability to choose from among 25 schools, with controls for racial balance. In 1999-2000, when Rockford was still under court order, only two schools in Rockford were racially identifiable (Watters, 2003). The federal district court declared RPS unitary in 2001 and released it from the court order.

By the 2002-2003 school year, 15 schools had become racially identifiable (Watters, 2003). The district’s proportions of Black and low-income students were growing, while its overall student enrollment was falling. The federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements further strained the RPS choice policy. Multiple schools on the West Side had been identified for improvement under NCLB, which gave their students the right to transfer to higher-performing schools. Rockford did not have sufficient capacity in higher-performing schools to accommodate all of the students who had the right to transfer.

RPS’s TASAP proposal described its history of segregation and its current difficulties with school choice, declining enrollment, and academic achievement (Rockford Public Schools
The proposal declared that the project goal was to “Receive Board approval to implement a modified student assignment plan developed by all stakeholders to correct current inadequacies,” and also to “ensure the RPS does not resegregate schools” (p. e0, italics in original). Superintendent Lavonne Sheffield said in an interview that she had wanted to hire an experienced demographer to help address challenges with segregation and student assignment (interview, January 23, 2013).

Although the proposal promised “more demographically balanced schools” (p. e16), it is hard to tell what kind of balance RPS leaders had in mind. The proposal mentions the *Parents Involved* decision as a legal obstacle to pursuing racial balance, and cites Richard Kahlenberg’s work on the benefits of SES integration (p.e8). It also cites something called “small scale balancing theory” that is “widespread in districts where school closures/consolidations have presented the need to regenerate school populations with populations capable of achieving AYP” (e15). RPS leaders may have disagreed on whether to balance enrollments at all. Rockford NAACP education committee chair Chigozie Achebe claimed, “she [Sheffield] was not responsible for bringing TASAP in; that was something that the board had done before she came. They had planned all along to go back to the zoning. They wanted to get rid of the school choice.” Achebe charged that the public engagement included in RPS’s TASAP proposal was intended to show that most parents in the city did not want to bus their kids back and forth across town. They wanted to show that too much money was being spent on busing children back and forth across town to these different schools, and that the achievement rate was not improving as a result.

One sign of possible RPS ambivalence about how to change its SAP is that the TASAP proposal notes one staff member’s prior experience both in managing federal Voluntary Public School Choice Grant funds, and serving on the city’s 2007 Elementary Zone Committee (e18).
Complicating the politics of the project, by the time Sheffield arrived in Rockford, the two Board of Education members who had been the most supportive of her hiring had left the board, and a new member was elected on a platform of returning to neighborhood schools (Lewis et al. 2013).

Public engagement. In the first phase of the TASAP project, the RPS “core team” and a workgroup of 30 “key stakeholders” developed SAP scenarios, none of which included provisions to produce diversity (Lewis et al. 2013, 26). Phase 2 of the public engagement consisted of 23 focus groups that discussed current RPS policies and the options for change. The focus groups showed a split in the community. A consultant’s report to RPS said that 66% of focus group participants, particularly people who lived in central and east Rockford, plus the business community, favored creating zones. People from the west side, which benefited from choice, wanted to keep the status quo (Lewis et al. 2013, 26-27). In Phase 3, RPS hosted “open houses” at different schools, to narrow the options down to 3 that would be presented to the Board of Education. Demographer Shannon Bingham, hired with TASAP funds, also added questions on student assignment to a mail survey that RPS was already sending to families. In contrast to the focus group results, sources suggest that nearly 50% of respondents to Bingham’s Parent Mail Survey favored choice, and the choice plan was broadly popular (Rockford School Board member, personal communication, 2013; L. Sheffield, personal communication, January 23, 2013; TASAP Final Performance Report, 2012). The 3 options presented to the Board were the status quo, zones, or assigning based on clusters in a zone.

Chamber of Commerce mobilization. In parallel with the RPS public engagement process, the Rockford Chamber of Commerce also surveyed its members about student assignment and mobilized to influence policy development. The Chamber’s leaders believed that the city’s public schools were a “weak spot” that constrained economic development because
they made “recruiting people to live in Rockford as professionals coming from outside the community” a challenge (Forsman interview). Because of school choice, families who bought houses in Rockford did not know for sure which elementary school their children would attend. The Chamber and its allies believed that this uncertainty lowered real estate values and harmed the city’s tax base (Rockford Chamber of Commerce Public Education Survey, 2010).

Zone supporters hoped that the predictable connection of zoned schools to homes in particular neighborhoods would help recruit families to live in Rockford, thus raising property values and tax revenues for RPS. On the expenditure side, according to an article in the city’s major newspaper, the district could save $4 million on transportation once the new plan had been fully implemented (Bayer, 2010). Presumably, this would be $4 million that RPS could spend on school improvement. The Chamber organized the Zones Now coalition, whose members included We Choose Rockford (a community group formed by local residents to advocate for neighborhood schools), the Rockford Area Realtors, the Rockford Homebuilders Association, and the Northern Illinois Building Contractors Association. The coalition developed a website and a Facebook page, and disseminated a petition to support zones. Members of Zones Now also spoke at board meetings in order to underscore the importance of abandoning the choice plan for one that favored zones.

The Rockford NAACP branch had not been involved in developing the TASAP proposal and did not mobilize until the political appeal of the Chamber’s position became clear. A concerned school board member then encouraged the NAACP to increase their presence and public support for retaining choice (anonymous interview). Sheffield herself did not take a public position, possibly because she had made some enemies with her outspokenness on racial disparities in RPS.
The Board of Education vote. By the time the Board voted on the new SAP, it was the site of intense conflict around Sheffield, who had by this time been publicly accused of mishandling the teachers union, of being too controversial, and even of alcoholism. (Grist-Cunningham, 2011). As the controversy about Sheffield increased, so did claims that there was something inappropriate or unethical about TASAP and Sheffield’s decision to use grant funds to hire Shannon Bingham, with whom she had previously worked. As a result, in July 2010, a complaint was filed with the Office of the Inspector General regarding TASAP (Clayburg, 2011).

The Rockford Board of Education voted 5-2 to shift from the choice SAP to zoned elementary schools. Out-of-zone students could continue in the schools they were already attending, but RPS would no longer provide transportation for them. This outcome differs both from some of the intentions that RPS expressed in its TASAP proposal and from Superintendent Sheffield’s personal belief that choice was needed for Black students to continue having access to the district’s better-performing schools.

Effects of the new SAP. Rockford’s enrollment decreased from (26,111) in 2010-11 before the SAP was implemented to 25,020 in 2017-18, after the SAP had been fully implemented for all elementary schools that were affected by the SAP changes. Among elementary schools, the SAP implementation coincided with substantial decline in the enrollment among non-charter schools in the district. Although students of all racial/ethnic groups declined in size, the number of white students declined most precipitously, by more than 1000 students, and were 32% of enrollment by 2017-18. During this time, the district lost more Latinx students than black students, and black students were the second largest group of students at 30%. The
district also had eight fewer elementary schools operating in 2017-18 (29) than in 2010-11 (37), although some schools were now operating as district-run prekindergarten schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
<th>Elementary school enrollment and racial composition in Rockford Public Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2010-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>3749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinx</td>
<td>3845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial + Native American + Native Hawaiian</td>
<td>1039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>4942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14129</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Excludes charter schools & pre-K-only schools

The analysis of segregation in Rockford considers the entire enrollment of elementary school students as all had been assigned under the new SAP by 2017-18. Black-white and Hispanic-white dissimilarity declined (a bit more for the latter, which was also higher at both times), and could potentially be an artifact of fewer schools operating in 2017-18. Segregation remained moderate for black-white (.40) and Hispanic-white (.45) elementary school students in 2017-18. Additionally, isolation declined modestly for black, white, and Hispanic students. Hispanic students had the highest isolation (44%) despite a lower share of the enrollment (27%) than the other two major groups.

Finally, we examined the existence, persistence and formation of enclave elementary schools in Rockford, which are defined here as schools in which the percentage of white students is 15 percentage points greater than the district white percentage, which was 35% in 2010-11. In addition, because the east side of Rockford has historically had more white and affluent residents, we track the location of enclaves by the east vs west side of the district. Seven of the

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2 When charter elementary schools were included, there was slightly higher black-white dissimilarity and Black isolation than without.
37 elementary schools were classified as an enclave and in each, the first grade enrollment was also disproportionately high white percentage. By 2017-18, one of the 7 enclaves had closed. Of the 6 remaining, all but Carlson Elementary remained an enclave when examining the entire enrollment—and the first grade of Carlson was much higher than the overall enrollment, which might be indicative of increasing white enrollment among younger students. Most of these schools had a grade 1 enrollment that was majority white. Note, all enclave schools were located on the east side of the district.

Table 3
Enclave elementary schools in Rockford

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>East/west</th>
<th>2010-11 white %</th>
<th>2010-11 G1 white %</th>
<th>2017-18 white %</th>
<th>2017-18 G1 white %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arthur Froberg Elem School</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brookview Elem School</td>
<td>east</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherry Valley Elem School</td>
<td>east</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clifford P Carlson Elem School</td>
<td>east</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maude E Johnson Elem School</td>
<td>east</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Milford Elem School</td>
<td>east</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Swan Elem School</td>
<td>east</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Rockford elementary students</td>
<td></td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Cherry Valley lowest grade is grade 3; does not include Thurgood Marshall Elementary School that was a gifted and talented school and the only enclave school on the west side.

Finally, when examining whether the SAP had created new enclaves, two additional schools were at least 15 percentage points higher in white percentage than the district share of elementary school students in 2017-18, and in one school, the percentage of grade 1 white students was considerably higher than the entire school enrollment. Each of these new enclaves was also on the east side, showing a geographic clustering of enclaves in the district.

Table 4
New elementary school enclaves in Rockford
Conclusion. Rockford had a long history of racial discrimination in its public schools, and a relatively recent history of court intervention. Like many other Northern urban centers, it had experienced population and enrollment declines, particularly among White students. In retrospect, the hiring of Lavonne Sheffield, the district’s first superintendent of color, and the TASAP proposal language around diversity and integration look more like the moment of maximum commitment to diversity and racial equity in the district, rather than like the beginning of a new and sustained focus. Even the language of the TASAP proposal is ambiguous, suggesting that RPS leaders had not reached a consensus when they hired Sheffield and submitted the grant. The goals of “balance” and preventing resegregation quickly fell off the agenda when the Rockford Chamber of Commerce mobilized and argued that returning to neighborhood elementary schools would attract more White and economically-advantaged people to live in the city. This has not happened so far. Given the possibility that some RPS district staff already favored zones, and the shifts in Board membership after RPS submitted the TASAP proposal, it is also possible that the Chamber of Commerce mobilization pushed the Board in a direction it already wanted to go.

Boston

In the early 1990s, Boston was one of the first U.S. cities to shift to “mayoral control” of its public schools. Thomas Menino, the first Boston mayor to have the power to appoint all
members of the Boston School Committee, was still in office when Boston submitted its TASAP grant. Menino and many other people in the city wanted to go back to something like neighborhood schools, strengthening the connection between where a family lived and where its children attended school. This happened in March 2013, when the School Committee approved a new, algorithm-based SAP based on the recommendation of an External Advisory Committee (EAC). The algorithm defines a choice set of schools for each K-8 grade level and address in the city, which includes all of the nearby schools. If fewer than 4 of the nearby schools are not in the top half of the city’s school rankings, the algorithm adds more-distant schools.

**Prior history and TASAP proposal.** In 1974, the federal district court in Boston ruled that the Boston Public Schools (BPS) had practiced de facto segregation through its student-assignment policies. Initially, the court ordered mandatory busing, but later, the remedy shifted to controlled choice within three large sections of the city for elementary and middle schools, and citywide choice for high schools. BPS continued this policy after the court declared the district unitary in 1990, until the threat of a new lawsuit led the district to abandon racial controls in 1999. The race-neutral version of the SAP gave students in a school’s walk zone priority access to half of its available seats. Former Superintendent Tom Payzant had characterized this as a way of maintaining diversity and providing children in low-income neighborhoods with a chance to access schools in more-advantaged neighborhoods (*Boston’s Children First v Boston School Committee*, 2002), but most Boston schools’ enrollments were predominantly low-income students of color, as was the district itself. One EAC member noted, “we’re not diverse…we’re mostly Black and Hispanic and poor” (interview). BPS demographics contrasted with the city’s overall demographics.

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3 In Massachusetts, the policy-making body for the public schools that would be called a school board in most other states is called the School Committee.
By the mid-2000s, the SAP faced criticism for several reasons. Many BPS students attended schools that were under state scrutiny for poor performance. Because the choice zones were geographically large, some students had long bus rides that did not necessarily take them to schools better than the ones close to their homes. Residents of middle-class neighborhoods pressed the city to move back to neighborhood schools, so that their children would have guaranteed access to the generally better-performing schools near their homes. Mayor Menino and his allies argued for neighborhood schools in two ways. First, they pointed out the complexity, high cost, and apparent perversity of the three-zone SAP. Menino routinely argued for taking money out of “gas tanks” and putting it in classrooms. The Boston Globe quoted neighborhood school supporters who emphasized the appeal of being in a school close to home, with neighborhood friends. (Ebbert & Russell 2011; Ebbert 2011). Anecdotal evidence suggested that more families might enroll their children in BPS if the system became more “family friendly” by reducing transportation distances and uncertainty about school placements (anonymous interview). Some critics of the three-zone SAP also believed that it took away “the accountability and ownership” of neighborhood schools (anonymous interview) and ending it “should bring more community resources to bear on school improvement scores.” Boston had had a few high-profile examples of middle-class parents entering a previously unappealing neighborhood school in large numbers and then improving it through volunteer work and fundraising, and it seemed possible that the new SAP could lead to this happening in more places (McDermott & Fung-Morley 2018).

Boston’s Black community was also not necessarily pushing for more racially-balanced schools. Many Black Bostonians distrusted BPS because of its long history of overt discrimination against Black students prior to 1974 (Snyder interview), and the violence that
many Black students experienced during busing (Boston Busing/Desegregation Project 2011). As the Boston charter school sector expanded in the early 2010s, many Black students enrolled in the new schools (McDermott & Fung-Morley 2018).

In 2004, Mayor Menino appointed a task force to hear public input on increasing the number of choice zones, so that students would end up in schools closer to home. In 2009, Superintendent Johnson floated a proposal for 5 zones. Neither proposal got very far because of political pressure from advocates for children in parts of Boston where higher-performing schools were scarce, and who would have been in different zones from the ones with the better schools. Any proposal to shift the boundaries of BPS’s school choice zones created political conflict by producing zero-sum changes in neighborhoods’ increased or decreased access to schools (McDermott et al. 2015).

Submitted shortly after Superintendent Johnson retracted her 5-zone proposal, Boston’s TASAP proposal was a partnership between BPS and three civil rights organizations that had mobilized against smaller zones. The proposal promised to review other districts’ SAPs and convene a public engagement process, leading to a new SAP that would “ensure that BPS families have equitable access to high quality classrooms, and that resegregation does not occur” so that children would be educated “within racially and ethnically diverse classrooms” (BPS 2009, e11). The partnership fell apart in 2010 because BPS and the civil rights organizations had different priorities. The civil rights groups sought to “engage around issues of inequality using the student assignment plan as one place where we could have this discussion” and to explore regional approaches such as interdistrict choice (Eaton interview). In contrast, BPS leaders and Mayor Menino wanted a new SAP for Boston—not a regional approach—and were enthusiastic
about learning from districts like Seattle that had returned to neighborhood schools (Goar interview).

**Public engagement after 2010.** After the TASAP partnership broke up, Mayor Menino continued to push for smaller choice zones and schools closer to home. At the start of his last mayoral term in 2012, he and Superintendent Johnson appointed an External Advisory Committee (EAC) on student assignment, charged with engaging Boston residents and developing a plan to recommend to the School Committee. BPS and the EAC made a genuine effort to involve diverse communities, by holding public meetings in different locations around the city, providing interpreters in multiple languages, and complementing the meetings with an online survey.

However, despite these efforts, BPS heard more from middle-class neighborhoods. Nearly a third (32%) of survey responses came from just two such neighborhoods, Charlestown and West Roxbury (BPS 2012, p.29). In contrast, Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan together accounted for 9% of the survey responses (BPS 2012, p. 29), although 48% of BPS students live there (Pitkin 2016, p. 115). Although respondents in all but one neighborhood agreed that “academics” was the most important thing they looked for in a school, beyond this agreement there were differences. People in middle-class neighborhoods ranked proximity to home second, while residents of mixed-income and low-income places “were more likely to choose ‘safety’ over ‘close to home’ when asked about choice preferences” (BPS 2012 p. 6).

Summaries of the engagement process treated the priorities of middle-class residents as if they were generally held citywide. The EAC adopted “quality, close to home” as its goal. BPS’s June 2012 report opened with a quote from Mayor Menino: “I am committing tonight that one year from now Boston will have adopted a radically different student assignment plan—one that
puts a priority on children attending schools closer to their homes” (BPS 2012, p. 1). During the fall of 2012, BPS convened another round of community meetings where residents could examine maps of proposals for smaller zones, ask questions, and give feedback. There was a second online survey, which like the first one had a preponderance of respondents from middle-class neighborhoods.

Even though BPS maintained control over the agenda of the EAC process, it made all of the data behind its models public and invited the public to submit alternative SAP proposals. A proposal from an MIT Ph.D. student became the basis of the EAC’s recommendation to the School Committee. This “Home Based” proposal solved the problem of zero-sum boundary politics by using an algorithm to define a basket of school options for each address in the city, at each grade level. The Home Based algorithm puts all the schools within one mile of the student’s address into the basket, and then adds higher-performing schools from elsewhere if fewer than four of these schools are in the top two quartiles of the city based on test scores. Ideally, if BPS has high-performing schools in every area of the city, the algorithm will include only nearby schools in each student’s choice set, thus achieving neighborhood schools without any future need to redraw boundaries.

Critics of the Home-Based algorithm, like Quality Education for Every Student (QUEST) and Massachusetts Advocates for Children, emphasized the ways in which it would still produce disparities in access to better schools for different neighborhoods. Although the algorithm would put at least a minimum number of schools with higher test scores in each choice basket, students with more high-scoring schools within a mile of their homes would have baskets with higher proportions of high-scoring schools. Throughout the EAC’s process, the majority of public comments at meetings were negative, and emphasized the likelihood that students in low-income
neighborhoods would be shut out of higher-performing schools, with no certainty that their schools would improve. Right before the EAC made its final recommendations, about 200 people turned out for a meeting at a school in historically black Roxbury, at which nearly all speakers opposed the change (McDermott & Fung-Morley, 2018).

This opposition did not derail the Mayor’s and the EAC’s push to link school assignments with home addresses. In interviews, supporters of the new SAP claimed that opponents of the plan did not represent the city as a whole. However, neither did the survey and community meeting participants whose ideas had been the basis for emphasizing “close to home” schools. Nevertheless, proximity prevailed. The School Committee voted on March 13, 2013 to accept the EAC’s recommendation, and BPS first used the algorithm in early 2014 to make assignments for the 2014-15 school year.

**Effects of the new Boston SAP.** BPS enrollment dropped from 54,258 in 2013-14, the year before the new SAP took effect, to 53,189 in 2016-17. Numerically, the largest loss was of Black students. White, Asian-American, and Latinx numbers actually increased. At about the same time as the SAP change, charter school capacity in the Boston area grew, and Black students are disproportionately likely to enroll in charter schools (McDermott and Fung-Morley 2018). Enrollment also declined in grades K-2, the ones in which students chose schools using the new SAP. However, White and Asian enrollment in these grades increased, so the K-2 population has higher proportions of White and Asian students than before the new SAP, and compared with BPS as a whole.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5</th>
<th>Boston Grades K-2 Enrollment by Race</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2013-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

27
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>2013-14</th>
<th>2014-15</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>4,001</td>
<td>3,790</td>
<td>-5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>890</td>
<td>921</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinx</td>
<td>6,094</td>
<td>5,069</td>
<td>-16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial + Native American</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>1,745</td>
<td>2,047</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13,179</td>
<td>12,332</td>
<td>-6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Our results indicate the assignment algorithm is associated with a modest increase in segregation for black students. The dissimilarity index for black and white kindergarteners increased by 0.04 following the implementation of the HPSAP. The isolation index for black students in the grades affected by the HPSAP increased by 0.011 relative to the index for grades not subject to the assignment algorithm in 2014-15, the first year of the new assignment algorithm, and by an additional 0.017 in the following year. For white students, the isolation index increased by 0.015 in the first year of the new assignment algorithm. The difference between the percent of black students in a school and the percent of black students in the district as a whole increased by 0.024 on average for kindergarteners following the implementation of the assignment algorithm in 2014. The corresponding measure for white students did not change.

It is possible that the new SAP is increasing the number of enclave schools, and allowing some elementary schools that were already enclaves to become more disproportionately White. To identify schools that had enclave characteristics before BPS’s new SAP went into effect, we ranked BPS elementary and K-8 schools by their overall percentage White during the 2013-14 school year. Eight of these schools had 40% or more white students during the 2013-14 school year. There was a gap of about 11 percentage points between the school with the 8th highest
White proportion and the school with the 9th highest, which suggested that 40% white was a reasonable working definition of a Boston enclave elementary school in 2013-14.  

Table 6 shows the eight 2013-14 enclave schools’ overall and Grades K-2 percentage white, and their 2016-17 percentage white in Grades K-2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joyce Kilmer</td>
<td>60.4%</td>
<td>58.9%</td>
<td>56.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver Hazard Perry</td>
<td>54.6%</td>
<td>60.6%</td>
<td>64.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren-Prescott</td>
<td>54.6%</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliot</td>
<td>49.0%</td>
<td>59.3%</td>
<td>68.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph P. Manning</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
<td>45.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. William Henderson</td>
<td>43.6%</td>
<td>43.2%</td>
<td>42.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyndon</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
<td>71.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyon K-8</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All BPS grades K-2</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data source: [http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/reports/enroll/#](http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/reports/enroll/#)

Five of the eight enclave schools (Perry, Eliot, Manning, Lyndon, and Lyon) had a whiter K-2 population in 2016-17 than in 2013-14. The white increases in the enclave schools were mostly larger (in percentage points) than the decreases, and the white increases at Eliot and Lyndon are particularly large. Thus it is possible that HBSAP is increasing the enclave qualities of some schools.

It is also possible that the new SAP is creating new enclave schools. In the 2016-17 data, 5 schools have White percentages between 30% and 40%, and in all of them, the proportion of White students in grades K-2, thus assigned through the new SAP, is higher than that of the entire school.

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4 This is a different definition from the one used in this paper for Rockford, St. Paul, and Portland. Future iterations of this research will apply the same definition in all four districts.
Table 7
New Boston Enclave Schools in 2016-17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Overall % White</th>
<th>K-2 % White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mozart</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>49.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellis Mendell</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston Teachers Union School</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manassah E Bradley</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dante Alighieri Montessori School*</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
* Not open in 2013-14

However, BPS could also see more of its elementary schools gain White enrollments without deepening the enclave tendency if the absolute number of White students continues to increase as enrollments of Black and Latinx students, the two largest groups in the schools, decrease.

**Conclusion.** Throughout Boston’s SAP change process, city leaders made proximity to home the most important priority for the new SAP. Reflecting on the outcome of the EAC’s process in his memoir, Menino said, “the vestiges of the school assignment plan that fueled the busing crisis will soon be gone. Busing will no longer break up community in Boston” (2014, p. 110). Residents of neighborhoods with fewer appealing schools may not have shared this preference. The Boston case shows how the preferences of people in predominantly middle-class and White neighborhoods can dominate a public process, even without visible mobilization by middle-class White people. The resulting SAP appears to be strengthening the enclave characteristics of some schools, and creating new enclave schools.

**Portland**

Portland’s TASAP proposal focused on high schools. The Portland Public Schools (PPS) began with an ambitious plan to reduce the number of comprehensive high schools in the city and to balance them demographically. However, under political pressure, it closed fewer schools than initially envisioned, and abandoned the idea of demographic balance. It kept the parts of the plan that tied schooling to neighborhood more tightly by ending open choice at the high school
level. Additionally, PPS closed one high-school campus, converted the high school in the city’s historically Black neighborhood to a middle-college magnet, and redistributed money and programs among the remaining schools.

**Prior history and TASAP proposal.** Portland was never under order to desegregate its schools, though it undertook some voluntary integration efforts in the 1970s. These consisted mainly of moving Black students from predominantly Black schools in the Albina neighborhood into predominantly White schools elsewhere. Well into the twentieth century, Albina had been the only part of Portland in which Black people could rent or own homes, and the only community in Oregon with a significant Black population and institutions (Gibson 2007). At the time of Portland’s TASAP grant, Albina had been undergoing rapid gentrification, which threatened its identity as a Black community even though the schools in the neighborhood remained more Black than those of the rest of the city. Albina gentrifiers tended to use the city’s liberal school transfer policies to send their children out of the neighborhood to other PPS schools or charters (Huseman 2016).

As part of PPS’s voluntary integration efforts, high school students had long been able to enroll in a school other than their neighborhood school. The transfer policy was originally intended to make the schools more diverse than the neighborhoods they served. However, students in low-income zones were particularly likely to transfer to other schools or to enroll in the citywide Benson Polytechnic High School, which left those zones’ high schools underenrolled. This pattern became stronger after No Child Left Behind gave students the right to transfer out of underperforming schools. In 2009-10, the high schools’ proportions of students eligible for free and reduced price meals ranged from 10.5% (Lincoln) to 70.5% (Jefferson).
Their proportion of White students ranged from 19.6% (Jefferson) to 76% (Wilson) (www.pps.k12.or.us/schools-c/profiles/enrollment).

Superintendent Carole Smith launched the High School Design process in 2008 and appointed the Superintendent’s Advisory Committee on Enrollment and Transfer (SACET). The goals of High School Design were to reduce the number of comprehensive high schools, balance enrollments among them in terms of both overall student population and diversity, and use the redistribution of state funds that would follow from redistributing students to make their programs more uniform (such as the number of AP and remedial courses offered). Portland’s TASAP proposal fit into the larger project. It goes into detail on the differences in enrollment, diversity, and course offerings between the 4 higher-income high schools and the 6 lower-income ones and declares, “the district’s schools are now more segregated by race, culture, and class than they have ever been before.” The proposal attributes this segregation largely to transfers among high schools, which were pulling students away from the lower-income schools and leaving them with higher proportions of students of color. PPS proposed to modify its student assignment plan through boundary changes, to balance enrollments both in terms of numbers and in terms of a multifactor definition of diversity (Portland TASAP, e3).

**Redesigning “High School Design.”** What PPS actually did was significantly less of a change than what the TASAP proposal outlined. PPS used the largest portion of its TASAP funds to pay SEER Analytics, a Florida-based data mapping firm, to develop a computer application that would make it possible to compare possible high-school closures and boundary redefinitions (TASAP Coordinator interview). Superintendent Smith hoped to end up with 7 comprehensive high schools, down from 10, and to balance them according to a multifactor diversity index. A parent who had been part of a community advisory group on high schools
remembered that the superintendent’s “original proposal was pretty radical and had those types of scenarios where you are going to bring kids from the rich West Side into Roosevelt [a North Portland school with a large low-income population] and give it an infusion of college-bound kids” (Rupp interview). The TASAP coordinator recalled that a central-office administrator who retired during the process had been “spreading the vision of Wake County,” meaning that no school would have more than 40% of its students eligible for free or reduced-price meals (TASAP coordinator interview).

All parts of the city would have been affected if this original vision had been adopted. A November 2009 article in the Oregonian newspaper reported on a meeting at Lincoln High School, on the city’s more-affluent West Side, at which parents had expressed their concerns about what could happen. Rumors spread that all of the high schools were potential targets for closure. Middle-class parents at Grant High School (62.2% White, and 22.5% eligible for free and reduced-price meals; see http://www.pps.k12.or.us/schools-c/profiles/enrollment/enroll_out.php?rpt=403) believed their school was particularly vulnerable because of its location near several other schools with greater proportions of low-income students, where their children could potentially be reassigned for demographic balance (anonymous interview). Parents at Grant also feared that even if the school survived, it would lose some of its extensive advanced course offerings when PPS redistributed funds. Concerns about how the proposed changes would affect the city’s better-resourced high schools (Melton 2009).

Although Grant had not been publicly identified for possible closure, its parent community mobilized. The TASAP coordinator remembered, “I was getting 70 emails a day, I was showing up on blogs, I was getting personally attacked…” (TASAP coordinator interview).
Given this level of response to a vaguely defined threat, the ideas of closing a middle-class school and balancing the diversity of the high schools’ enrollments were …“dead in the water” (Rupp interview). Early in 2010, Superintendent Smith recommended to the Board of Education that they close the three small programs that made up Marshall High School on the city’s far southeast side, reinvest in Jefferson as a neighborhood comprehensive high school, so that it could regain the students it had lost, reduce enrollment in Benson Polytechnic High School, and shift several magnet programs housed in the comprehensive high schools. According to the TASAP coordinator, this was a less ambitious change than some principals and district administrators had wanted, but actually balancing schools for diversity “wouldn’t have flown in Portland anyway, like that was really clear, from, like our board wouldn’t have gone for it. They would’ve been unelected in a heartbeat” (TASAP coordinator interview). The TASAP coordinator also noted that even without an actual diversity-balance requirement, ending free choice among the comprehensive high schools would increase their diversity because choice had made the schools less diverse than their neighborhoods.

The Jefferson High School compromise. Many in the city’s African American community supported Smith’s proposal to reinvest in Jefferson High School because of the school’s historical importance to the city and state African American populations. However, this reinvestment is not quite what actually occurred. After Smith recommended closing Marshall, the Board of Education believed they might still need to close a second school in anticipation of state education budget cuts. Because of its low enrollment, Jefferson was the vulnerable school. However, PPS did not close it. Instead, in consultation with community leaders in Albina, PPS decided to keep Jefferson open as a school of choice with a “middle college” focus in partnership
with Portland Community College (PCC), its neighbor across the street.\textsuperscript{5} Students from anywhere in the city can enroll at Jefferson. Students who live in the Jefferson neighborhood have guaranteed access to Jefferson, along with “dual citizenship” in Roosevelt, Madison, or Grant High School, depending on their address, if they want to attend a comprehensive school instead of the magnet. The three “dual citizenship” high schools are quite different from each other. Grant has a much lower proportion of low-income students and students of color than the other two. Roosevelt, the closest to the core of Albina, had just gone through a turnaround process and conversion from three small schools back into a single comprehensive high school.

In effect, the out-of-neighborhood choice policy has continued for students who live in the Jefferson neighborhood, though they only have dual citizenship in one other comprehensive high school rather than free choice among all the other schools, as in the old policy. On October 12, 2010, the Board of Education voted 6-1 to end free choice among the neighborhood comprehensive high schools, close Marshall, and convert Jefferson. Later policy changes redistributed funding among the comprehensive high schools, reducing advanced courses at some schools and increasing them in others, and redrew the high school zone boundaries to accommodate Marshall students and the Albina students who were “dual citizens” in Roosevelt, Grant, and Madison.

Some of our interviewees argued that the scaling back of High School Design reflected the power of the city’s White middle class. The students who were displaced by the Marshall closure got a longer commute and did not necessarily end up in schools with lower rates of poverty. Because of the way in which the boundaries between the high schools on the East Side

\textsuperscript{5} A “middle college high school” is one in which students earn college credit, or even an associate’s degree, during 11\textsuperscript{th} and 12\textsuperscript{th} grade.
were redrawn, many of them ended up at Madison High School, which had a 64.2% subsidized meal eligibility rate, rather than at Grant, which was closer to parts of the Marshall neighborhood and whose eligibility rate was about a third of Madison’s (Rupp interview). Making Jefferson High School into a magnet meant that Albina gentrifiers who had historically avoided the school could continue to do so with guaranteed access to a different high school. Lincoln and Wilson High schools on the West Side, both over 70% White, experienced no changes to their enrollment areas, though they did lose some of their course offerings when PPS equalized high school funding and programs.

**Effects of the new SAP.** Portland’s enrollment grew from 42,395 when the SAP was implemented in 2010-11 to 45,232 in 2017-18. Initially, after implementation, the high school enrollment declined, but it has increased now by almost 800 students since 2010-11. White students have helped to drive much of the enrollment increase since 2014-15, when all high school grades had been assigned under the new SAP. Black student enrollment has declined substantially during this time, while Latinx enrollment has experience an increase that is roughly the same as the Black student decline.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8</th>
<th>2010-11</th>
<th>2014-15</th>
<th>2017-18</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1614</td>
<td>1313</td>
<td>1127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>988</td>
<td>1060</td>
<td>1034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinx</td>
<td>1390</td>
<td>1680</td>
<td>1841</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multiracial + Native American + Native Hawaiian</td>
<td>753</td>
<td>899</td>
<td>1191</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>6232</td>
<td>5849</td>
<td>6564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10977</td>
<td>10801</td>
<td>11757</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: all classes in 2014-15 had been admitted under new SAP. Does not include charter schools.

Our analysis of segregation looks at the entire enrollment of the high schools in PPS since all grades were affected by the new SAP; there were 10 schools in 2010-11, and 9 in 2017-
Black-white dissimilarity grew .05 from 2010-11 to 2017-18, and was higher than Hispanic-white segregation during both years. Hispanic-white isolation grew only slightly (.01) even as they became the largest non-white group of high school students during this time. Both Black-white and Hispanic-white dissimilarity were moderately high during this time period. While black, white, and Latinx students all had higher isolation to same-race peers, changes during this time roughly tracked changes in enrollment composition. E.g., white isolation declined from 63% to 61% during this time while Latinx isolation rose from 17% to 21%.

Finally, as with each case, we examined how the implementation of the SAP affected enclave schools. We defined three of the then-10 high schools in PPS as enclaves in that their percentage of white students was at least 15% greater than the overall district’s white percentage of high school students. The three schools were Cleveland, Lincoln and Wilson and in the latter two of the three—Lincoln and Wilson—the ninth grade was also at least 15 percentage points higher than the overall district white percentage. All three schools experienced a slight decline in their overall white percentage, but Lincoln and Wilson remained at least 15 percentage points higher than the PPS high school average. In terms of enrollment size, Lincoln increased substantially and Wilson had a more modest increase; these two schools also did not experience the attrition among cohorts that other district high schools saw during the time period. Cleveland’s enrollment remained stable amid one fewer high schools and a higher enrollment of high school students.

Table 9
Portland Enclave High Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>School Percentage White</th>
<th>2010-11 Total</th>
<th>2010-11 Grade 9</th>
<th>2017-18 total</th>
<th>2017-18 grade 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All High Schools</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition a new enclave high school has emerged, particularly in recent years once the SAP has been fully implemented for all high school grades. Grant High School was higher in white percentage in 2010-11 than the district, and has increased substantially in white percentage since then. In particular, the last two ninth grade classes have had disproportionately higher percentages of white students and some cohorts have also increased in white percentage over time. Overall, the school’s enrollment has declined.

Table 10
New Enclave High School in Portland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>2010-11 Total</th>
<th>2010-11 Grade 9</th>
<th>2017-18 total</th>
<th>2017-18 grade 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grant</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All High Schools</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion.** Like all of the cities in this study, Portland’s TASAP grant project ended with the adoption of a new SAP that strengthened the connection between housing and school assignment PPS was focused on retaining the White/middle-class population it already has in its schools. They have succeeded in reaching this goal, and increasing overall enrollment, though gentrification is also forcing some residents out into lower-cost suburbs. The Portland case shows how White residents of recently gentrified, or gentrifying neighborhoods (like most of the East Side) can experience SAP politics very differently from White residents of neighborhoods that have always been relatively affluent. In Portland, these neighborhoods are on the West Side of the city, across the Willamette River. Although it seemed possible at the very beginning of the High School Design process that Lincoln or Wilson High School’s attendance zones might change, they were not affected by the redistricting on the East Side. In contrast to the Grant parents, they did not need to mobilize in order to achieve this outcome. In this respect, their geographic position was like that of wealthy suburbs with separate school districts, whose
advantages are baked in to local control of public education and zoning (McDermott 1999; Geismer 2017).

**St. Paul**

St. Paul’s student population is exceptionally diverse, with no racial group accounting for more than 30% of its enrollment at the time of the TASAP grant. The aggregate racial proportions for St. Paul do not show the national-origin diversity within categories, which includes refugees and recent immigrants such as Somalis, Hmong, and Karen. Many of charter schools also served St. Paul students, some of them with cultural or ethnic themes. Using TASAP funding to pay a consultant and conduct a public engagement process, the St. Paul Public Schools (SPPS) dismantled its system of city-wide school choice and magnets. This change was one part of a new strategic plan to make curriculum and instruction more consistent across the district. The new SAP divides the city into 6 regions for elementary school and 7 for middle and high school. Except for a few cross-regional or citywide programs, students choose schools within the region of the city in which they live. SPPS also reconfigured schools so that students who begin in a specialized elementary school program (like science and technology, or language immersion) can continue through middle and high school in the same type of program within their home region. The rationales for this change were that guaranteeing citywide transportation to any school cost too much, and that choice was leading both to less-diverse schools and worse academic outcomes. The long-range goal of the strategic plan was to improve school performance and ultimately attract more families to SPPS.

**Prior History and TASAP proposal.** Even though SPPS was never under a desegregation order, it had one of the oldest and most extensive systems of magnet schools in the U.S. It established its first magnet school in 1974, designed to draw White and middle-class
students to a predominantly Black, low-income school. By the early 2000s, SPPS administrators had doubts about whether the magnet schools were actually contributing to diversity or improved academic outcomes. Academic offerings and services varied from school to school and in the words of several interviewees, the system lacked “coherence.” Additionally, SPPS administrators also noted that because of funding constraints, many magnet schools could no longer truly offer the programs they promised (Cacy interview; Walker interview). They believed that with fewer magnet schools, SPPS could make the appropriate level of investment in all of them.

Steve Schellenberg, the SPPS assistant director for research, had written academic conference papers that analyzed St. Paul families’ choices. The analyses consistently showed that children attending schools further from home were likely to be in schools with lower test scores than the schools in their neighborhood, and where members of their own racial or ethnic group were more prevalent than in schools closer to their homes (Schellenberg 2012). Seeking a term for this tendency that was more neutral than “self-segregation,” Schellenberg coined the term “cultural comfort” to describe this latter set of choices (Schellenberg & Moore 2010; Schellenberg & Porter 2010).

SPPS administrators believed that because citywide choice did not have the benefits it was intended to have, they could reduce choice without increasing segregation or harming academic outcomes, and that reducing choice would probably be better for many families. SPPS’s TASAP application identified the problems currently facing the district as “monumental financial and operational challenges in continuing to provide essential educational services to Saint Paul students,” along with “one of the largest achievement gaps in the nation, a rapidly re-segregating district, declining enrollment,” and “an actively engaged community where school choice and city-wide transportation have become a virtual entitlement.” The proposal also
included development of a new SAP that would achieve “racial balance” (TASAP proposal, p. e0). Framing the engaged community as a challenge, not an advantage, provides insight into why SPPS leaders decided later to keep tight control over the SAP public engagement agenda.

In interviews in 2011, other SPPS administrators made it clear that they had used the TASAP-funded process to build a case for reducing choice in order to make systemic school improvement possible. Several used Schellenberg’s “cultural comfort” language to help explain why citywide choice was having perverse effects. Schellenberg remembered that previous efforts to reorganize school choice had failed because SPPS administrators had not done the necessary “preliminary work” to help the Board of Education understand the proposals (interview). As SPPS administrator Michelle Walker summarized, district leaders wanted to

…create a system where kids could feel comfortable and that there was rich programming in their neighborhood and that you were actually able to use the resources not to transport kids around but to reinvest on the instructional side and ensure that there were high performing schools, regardless of the type of school.

SPPS administrators believed that they could reduce choice without increasing segregation or harming academic outcomes, and that reducing choice would probably be better for many families because citywide choice did not have the benefits it was intended to have.

The Teamworks analysis. SPPS’s TASAP proposal said that the district would draw on three distinct kinds of technical assistance: market research, facilitation of community engagement, and “scenario development and management of financial and operational projections” (Proposal, p. e1). Instead, they retained a single consulting company called Teamworks, with which they already had a contract for strategic planning. Teamworks prepared a demographic and achievement analysis for SPPS that was not made public. According to interviews with people who knew the report well, Teamworks found that students’ neighborhoods were often more diverse than the schools they attended, and “much more racially
integrated than they used to be” (O’Connell interview). The report showed that African Americans, on average, performed poorly across all income levels, regardless of whether they attended neighborhood or magnet schools (anonymous interview). Students of all races and incomes in neighborhood schools were doing slightly better academically than their peers in choice schools. These conclusions were generally consistent with Steve Schellenberg’s analysis, and with what SPPS administrators already believed was true. Steve Schellenberg said that the district “hired an outside consultant to say the things we couldn’t have said ourselves.”

Teamworks also provided good news about the potential to avoid school closings, which SPPS leaders had assumed would be necessary. Teamworks identified a pocket of population growth of new immigrants and families (Walker Interview). Teamworks concluded that SPPS was losing enrollments because of quality, not demographic change or population loss (anonymous interview). Teamworks International predicted that if SPPS increased its market share by 1.5%, from 73% to 74.5%, then the district could keep all its schools open (Jean O’Connell Interview).

SPPS policy development. SPPS developed a proposal to divide the city into 6 regions (later 7) within which students would choose schools. In each region, the district would provide fewer but better-resourced magnet options that extended through grades K-12. According to SPPS administrator Jackie Turner, the regions’ boundaries had been drawn “to provide the greatest opportunities for integration among the schools” because they each had a diverse population. She continued, “we define integration as race, ethnicity, language, Special Education, and poverty.” Board of Education member Jean O’Connell pointed out that although each region was diverse, they did not have the same combinations of racial and ethnic groups, so the diverse schools in different places might have very different demographics. O’Connell also mentioned that narrowing families’ options could bring more White students into schools closer
to their homes that they had previously used citywide choice to avoid, thus increasing diversity in those schools. Superintendent Valeria Silva characterized the entire strategic plan as “a student-centered framework to move from pockets of excellence to excellence for every student” (Silva 2011).

SPPS leaders believed that the new SAP would complement the district-wide realignment of curriculum and instructional resources. Reducing transportation spending would free some funds to be used to support school improvement. Having more students in schools closer to their homes could also be part of an improvement strategy. Turner cited research findings that “parents’ involvement and parent support increases when kids are going to schools closer to home.” O’Connell predicted that non-parents would also become more engaged if their neighbors’ children were in their neighborhood schools, compared with the status quo in which potential volunteers “don’t know where to go and when they go to their ‘neighborhood school’ they don’t see the neighborhood kids that they expect to see there” (interviews).

Public engagement. The SPPS TASAP proposal said that SPPS officials would “inform SPPS stakeholder groups with balanced and objective information to increase confidence in understanding the challenges, opportunities, and solutions,” and “collaborate with stakeholder groups in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution” (TASAP proposal, p. e1).

In practice, SPPS’s public engagement process began with a fully developed plan that district leaders were committed to putting into practice. According to Michelle Walker, SPPS and Teamworks designed the public engagement process as a deliberate break from past efforts to change the SAP, in which “we went to the community and said, we know the system needs to change. What are your thoughts? Tell us what you think.” This time, although the district did
extensive outreach to its Parents Advisory Councils from different ethnic groups, and provided child care and food to make it possible for more people to participate, it firmly set the agenda for what it asked the diverse groups to do:

> when we went to the community, we said, ‘here’s what we know. Here’s what we know about our system. Here’s what we know needs to change. Here’s how we are proposing to change it. And we talked to people about it and we got some feedback on it but we really weren’t asking their permission to do it. We were more informing them about what needed to be done which I think went over pretty well (Walker Interview).

The assumption this time was that district leaders understood the issues better than potential defenders of the citywide choice SAP. Turner said, “while parents believe that their children do better with choice, we’ve looked at our data and discovered that really students on a whole are doing better closer to home that they are with being bused across the city.” O’Connell identified another goal, to “help the people who weren’t getting so hurt by this understand that it matters if some large percentage of the kids are being hurt.”

The Board of Education approved the strategic plan, including the new SAP, by a unanimous vote. Interviewees said that there had been little pushback from the community, either from White residents or from communities of color. Walker noted that nothing in the plan was threatening to White residents of predominantly White neighborhoods, since “they got to maintain their neighborhood status and [schools] will continue to be reflective of their neighborhood. To the extent that those neighborhoods become more diverse then the schools become more diverse.”

The only notable opposition came from the St. Paul NAACP branch. In an interview, its president complained that “we were definitely not at the table” for developing the proposal and that “it was pretty clear that this was at least going to maintain if not exacerbate current racial and socioeconomic segregation in St. Paul.” SPPS leaders countered that the NAACP
“misunderstood” the plan, as a return to requiring all students to attend the schools closest to their homes (interviews). Walker also noted that the NAACP “look[s] at diversity in terms of black and white and not necessarily some of the other student groups so I think that was also another kind of confusion around…schools becoming more segregated, that they weren’t looking at the diversity within the groups of students of color.” O’Connell agreed: “our issue with the NAACP is that their definition of diversity…seemed like it was more focused on the black and white issue and not being willing to accept that other diversity was part of the equation and that we had to deal with it as part of this plan.”

“Reflecting St. Paul” at the implementation stage. After the Board vote, SPPS convened nine “implementation teams” charged with developing details for how the policy would work in practice. This time, SPPS reached out to the NAACP, several of whose members served on the team that developed the priority order for allocating seats in schools. The policy that emerged from the team identified racial and economic diversity as the second-highest priority for enrollment, after keeping siblings together. It also included a priority called “Reflecting St. Paul,” (RSP) which sets aside up to 25% of the seats at 11 low-poverty elementary schools for students who live in high-needs neighborhoods (St. Paul Public Schools 2017, p. 6). However, RSP’s design limits its likely effects. For all but a few citywide schools, the RSP priority comes after the priority for students in the community school zone or the region served by a regional magnet (St. Paul Public Schools 2017, p. 5). Reflecting St. Paul then sets aside 25% of the seats that remain unfilled after applying these other priorities. This often will not be very many seats. Additionally, the 11 schools with set-asides for Reflecting St. Paul include a gifted and talented magnet with a test required for entrance, a Mandarin immersion school, and a French immersion school. The two immersion schools require proficiency in the
target language for students enrolling in grades 2 and above, which is likely to limit the number of students who will be able to use the set-aside seats.

**Effects.** The overall enrollment of St. Paul was virtually unchanged from 2010-11 to 2017-18, at just over 35,000 students. (St. Paul did not implement its new SAP until 2013-14.) However, the number of white students declined by over 1000 students during this time to 21% of enrollment, while the number of multiracial students and Asian students increased. Asian students at both points in time were the largest group of students, comprising 32% of the enrollment in 2017-18. Because St. Paul’s SAP affected all schools, we analyze enrollment and segregation for elementary, middle, and high schools. Eight new schools were operating in 2017-18 while 9 schools that were open in 2010-11 had closed, leaving a net of one fewer school in operation in 2017-18.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ALL SCHOOLS</th>
<th>2010-11</th>
<th>2017-18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>10115</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>11113</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinx</td>
<td>5007</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial + Native American + Native Hawaiian</td>
<td>988</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>8638</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35861</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Includes regular schools only, not prekindergarten-only schools.

Segregation increased as measured by dissimilarity for both dyads (black-white and Latinx-white), but more so for black-white unevenness (which was lower than Latinx-white at both times). Black-white dissimilarity increased by .04 to .42 in 2017-18 while Hispanic-white dissimilarity increased by only .01 to .46. Segregation levels were moderate during this time period. Changes in isolation for white, black and Hispanic students roughly tracked changes in overall racial composition with white isolation being the highest of the three groups. White
students attended schools, on average, that were 36% white in 2017-18, 15 percentage points higher than their overall share of enrollment. Black isolation was much closer to their share of enrollment (32%) and Hispanic isolation had remained steady during this time at 22%.

As with the other cases, we defined enclaves as schools in which the percentage of white students was 15 percentage points or greater than the districtwide share of white students. In 2010-11, the percentage of white students was 24% in the district, and 12 schools exceeded this threshold. All but three of those were majority white, which represents a substantial overrepresentation of white students. All enclaves that were majority white in 2010-11 remained so in 2017-18, but those that had been between 40 and 50% white were no longer defined as enclave schools in 2017-18 because their white percentages had dropped below 36%. Crossroads Montessori in particular had experienced a sharp decline in white percentage overall and among its youngest students. Six schools remained majority white in 2017-18, even as the district white percentage was only 21%. All of the 2010-11 enclave schools were elementary schools.

### Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>2010-11 white %</th>
<th>2010-11 lowest grade white %</th>
<th>2017-18 white %</th>
<th>2017-18 lowest grade white %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capitol Hill Magnet/Rondo</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chelsea Heights Elementary</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossroads Montessori</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expo For Excellence Elementary Sch</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groveland Park Elementary</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highland Park Elementary</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horace Mann School</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JJ Hill Montessori</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’Etoile Du Nord French Immersion Upper</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linwood Monroe Arts Plus Lower</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randolph Heights Elementary</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Anthony Park Elementary</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Five new enclave schools had formed by 2017-18, including two that were majority white. Two of these schools, the French immersion lower school and Open World Secondary School, were not open in 2010-11. Except for the French immersion school, the new enclave schools serve older students, compared to the existing enclave schools that were for younger students. Additionally, the existence of five new enclave schools offsets the decline of three existing enclaves discussed above for a net of two additional enclave schools. In sum, 14 out of 62 schools in 2017-18 were enclaves while 12 of 63 were in 2010-11.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>School white %</th>
<th>2017-18 white %</th>
<th>2017-18 lowest grade white %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Senior High</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highland Park Middle School</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highland Park Senior High</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’Etoile Du Nord French Immersion Lower</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open World Learning Secondary</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Last two schools were new schools since 2010-11

In future analyses, we will examine elementary, middle, and high schools separately in order to understand the extent to which racial composition of St. Paul schools is different for students of different ages. Because of the relatively high percentage of Asian students in St. Paul, we will also examine how that relates to changes in enclave schools.

**Conclusion.** St. Paul’s new SAP enactment aroused the least controversy of the four districts in this paper. One reason may have been that its community engagement was the least open-ended, and focused on bringing a parents on board with what SPPS administrators and the school board believed needed to be done. The people we interviewed in St. Paul identified only
two specific kinds of opponents of the new SAP. One was parents whose own children benefited from citywide choice and did not understand that it harmed other children. The second group was people who believed that school choice was generally good. District leaders believed these people were mistaken because the Teamworks analysis had reached the opposite conclusion, especially for Black students who particularly needed the school improvement efforts that the new SAP was intended to enable. The NAACP—which SPPS leaders believed had misunderstood the proposal—was the most visible manifestation of this kind of opposition.

Walker’s comment about how little many White residents had to lose from the new SAP suggests that SPPS leadership did not picture the new families SPPS hoped to recruit through its overall improvement effort as White or middle class. This is a major difference between St. Paul’s experience and that of the other three cities. Whether or not SPPS leaders were right that the new SAP and the rest of the strategic plan would lead to school improvement, which in turn would attract more families away from alternatives, they had a more multiethnic population in mind, including students who had enrolled in ethnic-theme charter schools.

**Discussion**

**Integration vs. Enclave Strengthening**

Rockford, Boston, and St. Paul leaders all hoped that their new SAPs would lead to increased enrollments, either by making their student assignment system more appealing, or as part of the overall improvement strategy in St. Paul. None of these three districts had increased overall enrollments in the grades affected by the new SAP, though St. Paul at least held essentially constant. Boston has more White students in the grades affected by the new SAP than it did before. However, BPS’s loss of 1,025 Latinx and 211 Black students contributed the most to the overall enrollment decline. Further research is needed to determine how much of BPS’s
Latinx and Black decline should be attributed to families leaving the city and how much to charter-school expansion.\(^6\) seems to be attracting more White elementary students now than before the SAP change. In the grades affected by the new SAP, White students had the largest increase. In contrast to the enrollment effect of the other three cities’ new SAPs, Portland’s high school enrollment has grown, with about the same percentage of White students as under the old SAP.

None of the districts’ new SAPs had dramatic effects on districtwide segregation measures in the affected grades, which might stand to reason given the still short time frame of returning to more proximity-based plans in most of the districts; it will be important to monitor these trends as families have more time to consider residential moves with schools being more closely tied to housing. All four districts had more enclave schools after implementation of their new SAPs. This suggests that making students’ school assignments more dependent on their home addresses may facilitate the development of new enclave schools. In all of the districts except St. Paul, most enclave schools became Whiter than they had been before. In St. Paul, only one enclave school became Whiter after the new SAP, though many had been considerably higher in their percentage of white students than the overall districtwide share of white students. This is consistent with our conclusion that St. Paul policy makers were not going out of their way to cater to White city residents. Intriguingly, three enclave schools’ White proportions dropped enough that they were no longer 15 percentage points above the district total, and therefore no longer enclave schools by our definition. A fourth enclave school’s post-implementation White percentage was only 16 percentage points above the district’s, so arguably that school also is no longer an enclave.

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\(^6\) Each of the four districts had a considerable presence of charter schools.
Agenda Control

Choice-based SAPs can either facilitate integration or strengthen the enclave-default dynamic, depending on the details of their design (Orfield 2013b). In contrast, because neighborhoods still tend to be segregated by race and/or class, SAPs that increase the connection between where students live and where they go to school should be expected to strengthen enclave schools by making them more like their neighborhoods (and less like the rest of the city) and harder to access from outside the neighborhood. If houses in middle-class or affluent neighborhoods come with guaranteed access to enclave schools, instead of uncertain school assignments through choice and lotteries, they will be more appealing to parents and potential parents, thus likely to increase in price. In general, more expensive neighborhoods are unlikely to become more diverse. This outcome is bad from the standpoint of equity, but potentially good if one goal of the SAP is to attract new city residents and boost property values.

The chances for a shift towards more demographically balanced schools may have initially been best in Portland because of how ambitious Superintendent Smith’s original plan was, but even there the district leaders changed their minds when it seemed likely that White residents would vote the board out of office, or (potentially worse) exit the system altogether. Two of our central office interviewees in Portland mentioned that another district advocate of demographically balancing the high schools had retired, which may have reduced enthusiasm for the project.

Rockford and Boston contrast because Rockford neighborhood school advocates were visible, while in Boston opponents of the new SAP predominated in public comments. In Rockford, the Chamber of Commerce and its allies were White, affluent, and in the majority demographically, all of which were sources of political power. But the overall debate terms had
already been set at the start of the public engagement process, when none of the options put forward by the district included diversity goals. Public comments in Boston tended to criticize the district’s proposals for SAPs that would emphasize “close to home” schools. However, once the Boston Public Schools collaboration with the civil rights organizations fell apart, Mayor Menino had the structural power to achieve his long-time goal of school assignments that would be more closely linked to where students lived. This is not to say that he forced anybody to make a decision that they would not otherwise have made; rather, BPS (shaped by two decades of Menino’s leadership) defined the EAC’s agenda so that “close to home” was its priority. Unlike in Rockford, nobody in Boston mobilized a coalition in favor of assigning students to schools closer to their homes. Fortunately for Menino and his allies, the open call for SAP proposals brought in one that helped finesse zero-sum politics by using an algorithm rather than lines on a map to define students’ choice sets.

In St. Paul, agenda control happened behind the scenes. District administrators had already worked out nearly all of the details of the new SAP prior to the TASAP-supported public engagement process. They explicitly said in interviews that the point of the public engagement was to explain their decision to the public and to get a diverse cross-section of the community to support it. There was no public or elected-official pressure for closer-to-home schools, as in Rockford or Boston. Except for last-minute objections from the local NAACP branch, there was also no mobilization against it. In contrast to the other three cities’ new SAPs, it is difficult to find elements of the new SAP that obviously work in the interests of people who live in neighborhoods that already have good schools. In short, St. Paul’s new SAP is not the result of White and middle-class interests controlling a school district’s SAP agenda.
However, it may be significant that we heard from a few interviewees that the new SAP does not really affect White St. Paul residents. District leaders (a mix of White people and people of color) set the agenda for a change they believed would be better for St. Paul students at large—the majority of whom were of color—while not changing much for typical White students. Implicitly, they were creating an opportunity for enclave schools to get even more enclave-like, and ending their historic commitment to school placements that could be completely independent of a student’s home address if the family wanted it that way. This meant that they believed they could create citywide school improvement while also tolerating enclaves, or put differently, that they did not see the enclaves’ existence as undermining their overall agenda.

**Downplaying Diversity**

Three themes predominated in arguments that the districts could appropriately enact new SAPs that did not include diversity goals. The first is that the policies intended to promote diversity had had perverse outcomes. In Boston, this included long bus rides that that scattered students to multiple schools that were not necessarily better than schools nearby. In St. Paul, research suggested that citywide choice facilitated segregation by letting families choose schools based on “cultural comfort,” and that students of color had better test scores when they attended schools closer to home. Portland had permitted students to choose a high school other the comprehensive one that served their neighborhood, in part so that the schools would become more racially diverse. By 2010, the district’s leaders believed that the high schools would be more diverse if they better reflected neighborhood demographics. (However, they did not extend this logic as far as retaining Jefferson as a comprehensive high school and requiring all students in Albina to attend it.)
The second was a shift from defining diversity in terms of overcoming historic White privilege to a broader definition that treated all kinds of diversity as equally beneficial even if they were not part of a response to structural disadvantages facing students of color. Redressing structural disadvantage through SAPs generally requires weakening the connection between where students live and where they go to school. However, if all diversity is interchangeably good, then there is much less tension between it and neighborhood schools. Even enclave schools in cities are usually more diverse than suburban or private schools. in which multiple kinds of diversity were seen as equally good outcomes. Since most urban neighborhoods have some kind of diversity, there need not be a tension between maintaining diverse schools and assigning students to schools close to their homes.

The third, grounded in the idea that the right strategies can improve schools regardless of whether they are socioeconomically and racially isolated, is that de-emphasizing diversity while emphasizing proximity over would contribute to making schools better. advocates of the SAP changes made in our four case-study cities all cited specific elements of their own policies that ostensibly would contribute to city-wide school improvement. These included shifting funds from transportation to classrooms (Boston, St. Paul, Rockford), attracting or retaining public school students (all four cities), making state funding of schools more equal as enrollments equalized (Portland), and creating favorable conditions for neighborhoods to organize for school improvement (Boston, St. Paul).

**Directions for Future Research**

As the post-TASAP SAPs approach the end of their first decade in place, the time is ripe to investigate how they are affecting resource allocation in the districts, and what their political feedback has been. In the area of resource allocation, analysis of school-level parent
organizations’ budgets over time could shed light on whether funding gaps between enclave and default schools are expanding. Henig et al. and Stone et al. both point out that it is easier to engage civic capacity at the level of a single school than citywide, and that parents of children in enclave schools tend to focus on maintaining the quality of their enclaves rather than on citywide improvement. Continuing to track district politics and policy will make it possible to analyze the extent to which this has happened.

It is also necessary to learn more about the interplay between choice within urban school districts and the increasing options that families have outside of those districts. This interplay is likely to depend on specific local contexts, in particular whether charter schools generally are a high-status option that appeals to White parents, or are designed along “no excuses” lines that tend to appeal more to Black and Latinx, working-class parents. Enrollment data in Boston suggests that BPS has lost mostly Black and Latinx students to charter schools, along with gaining in its proportion of White students. It is possible to imagine a future in which BPS’s primary constituencies are residents of primarily White, more affluent neighborhoods, along with low-income families (mostly Black and Latinx) who have defaulted into BPS because they are not aware of charter options or their children have been counseled out of charter schools.

**Conclusion**

Historically, desegregation and post-desegregation commitments to diverse schools have been difficult to maintain in the face of challenges from families who believe they would be better off if their public schools did not have diversity or integration requirements. Legally, the *Parents Involved* decision limits the scope of what school districts can do to maintain diverse schools. Politically, the separation of diversity goals from equity or school improvement reinforces the idea that diversity is unnecessary, or at best a nice though inessential add-on. For
all these reasons, it is easier than it has ever been for school districts that are not currently under
desegregation orders to do what advocates of proximity-based SAPs want.

Even if we accept for the sake of argument that the new SAPs will eventually contribute
to school improvement, they are still inequitable in one key way. When school assignments
become more tied to neighborhoods, children with better schools near their homes benefit
immediately because they gain more predictable access to those schools. Children in other
neighborhoods lose some access to schools outside their neighborhoods, and they have to wait
for the new SAPs to deliver on the promise that they will facilitate citywide school improvement.
Research on civic capacity and education suggests that we should be skeptical that this
improvement can happen while the enclave dynamic is strengthening. Policy analysts and
advocates who care about equity should be wary of SAPs that reproduce suburb-like parts of
urban school districts.
REFERENCES


Grist- Cunningham, L. (2011, April 27). Godspeed to Patrick Hardy and Lavonne Sheffield.


Watters, C. (2003, August 11). Restructuring of schools overdue. Rockford Register Star. pg. 1B, 4B.

Table 1: Case Study District Demographics at Time of TASAP Grants (2009-10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grantee</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>Percentage of District Students who are:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>55,371</td>
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<td>8.7%</td>
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<td>Portland</td>
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<td>9.6%</td>
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<td>3.3%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
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<td>St. Paul</td>
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<td>29.3%</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: NCES Common Core of Data, 2009-10