

# Twin Cities School District Segregation Solution: Five Districts

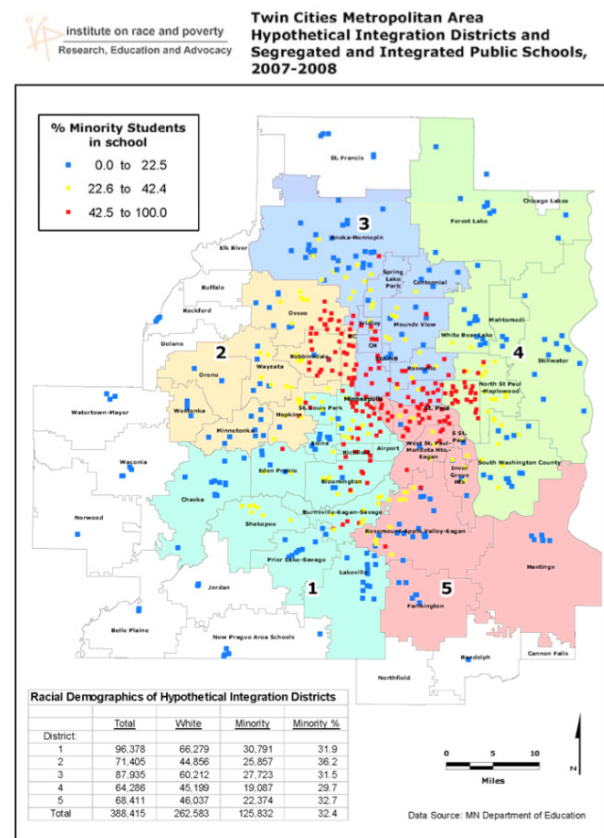
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**Abstract:**

Minnesota was at the forefront of progressive civil rights in the 1960s through the middle 1980s, even more so than San Francisco. In 1971, Minnesota State Legislature passed a law requiring Minneapolis, St. Paul, and its suburbs to contribute just under half of the growth in their commercial tax revenues to a regional pool which would be distributed to tax-poor areas. This regulation was revolutionary; a plan like this has never been tried at the Metropolitan level (Minnesota, 2015). However, racial segregation in the Twin Cities is at an all-time high in the twenty first century. This racialized gap is due to many reasons: charter schools, open enrollment, loss of funding for inner city schools, and how the geography of residential segregation correlates to school segregation. But in 2009, the Institute on Race and Poverty at the University of Minnesota published a study on a possible solution. They drafted a hypothetical map with five school districts for the Twin Cities metropolitan area. These five districts are integrated and distribute the wealth and race evenly throughout the districts which will lead to all districts having appropriate funding, adequate educational programs, and the value of integration.

From the 1960s through the mid-1980s, Minnesota was known for their progressive civil rights activism. Minnesota was on the forefront of enacting a fair housing ordinance and outlawing housing discrimination with the amendments to the 1974 Minneapolis Civil Rights Ordinance. This ordinance was enacted to provide equal opportunities to all of Minneapolis' citizens. When the Twin Cities were building their affordable housing during this time, they were very conscious to not create 'ghettos' by isolating low-income neighborhoods. The affordable housing being built was not all in one area of the Twin Cities, but spread out and integrated into wealthy neighborhoods. This integration was done by the creation of the regional government, the Metropolitan Council, who enacted this fair-share requirement in the Metropolitan Land Use Planning Act. This act required that all suburban communities must provide their fair share of affordable housing, which was the nation's best regional fair housing program (Minnesota, 2015). In the early 1970s, when the court order for public schools to be integrated passed, Minnesota took it a step further. The Minnesota state government adopted the Desegregation and Integration Law that required schools throughout Minnesota to be racially integrated. Racial segregation in Minnesota schools was drastically reduced. The progressive movement in Minnesota slowed abruptly in the mid-1980s.

**Map of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area with Five Integrated School Districts**



The Poverty Housing Industry (PHI) and the Poverty Education Complex (PEC) started to become very present in the political scene in Minnesota in the 1980s. Looking at these two organizations alone would lead someone to believe they help low income families and racial segregation. However, the PHI and PEC depend heavily on racial segregation. They pushed for the affordable housing to be built in the Twin Cities and not the suburbs, automatically creating very segregated schooling districts. The city schools declined which lead to the availability of open enrollment. Open enrollment is where parents can enroll their child outside of the specific school district that their home is in. Open enrollment allowed parents to choose to take their child out of integrated schools and enroll them in a more wealthy, white segregated school district with more educational and extra-curricular opportunities verses the inner-city school districts. The value of the city schools decreased further due to open enrollment (Minnesota, 2015).

Minnesota was the first state to pass a charter school law in 1991. Charter schools make up over twenty-five percent of total public school enrollment in Minneapolis alone (Minnesota, 2015). A charter school is

defined as a publicly funded independent school established by teachers, parents, or community groups under the terms of a charter with a local or national authority. Charter schools are a very controversial topic. One side sees charter schools as schools that allow parents to choose to enroll their student there and teachers want to be there more so than traditional public schools. On the flip side, most charter schools are almost completely comprised of minority students and are exempt from most of the requirements imposed upon by state and local boards of education regarding hiring and curriculum. There are a few crown jewels of charter schools whom outperform their traditional school counterparts. However, the clear majority of charter schools are outperformed by their traditional school counterparts, even after controlling for other characteristics such as race and family income (Minnesota, 2013). Comparing the percentages of non-white segregated schools, fifty-one percent of charter schools are predominantly comprised of minority students versus twenty-two percent for traditional schools. That is a twenty-nine percent difference.

Charter schools do not feel as though they need to submit plans for improving the academic achievement

**Table 1: Distribution of Charter Schools and Traditional Schools by School Type, 1995-2011**

School Year	Charter Schools Number of Schools			Charter Schools Percentage			Traditional Schools Percentage		
	Pred. White	Non-white Segregated	Integrated	Pred. White	Non-white Segregated	Integrated	Pred. White	Non-white Segregated	Integrated
1995-96	4	6	1	36	55	9	64	15	20
1996-97	4	7	3	29	50	21	64	16	20
1997-98	5	9	3	29	53	18	63	18	19
1998-99	7	15	5	26	56	19	61	19	20
1999-00	11	20	5	31	56	14	61	20	19
2000-01	11	21	10	26	50	24	58	21	20
2001-02	11	27	7	24	60	16	55	23	22
2002-03	14	33	10	25	58	18	53	23	24
2003-04	15	39	10	23	61	16	48	24	28
2004-05	22	43	15	28	54	19	48	24	27
2005-06	25	57	21	24	55	20	48	24	28
2006-07	29	56	23	27	52	21	45	25	31
2007-08	35	62	19	30	53	16	42	24	33
2008-09	36	68	23	28	54	18	41	25	34
2009-10	40	62	25	31	49	20	39	24	37
2010-11	37	67	23	29	53	18	39	25	36
2011-12	39	63	24	31	50	19	39	21	40
2012-13	40	63	21	32	51	17	37	22	40

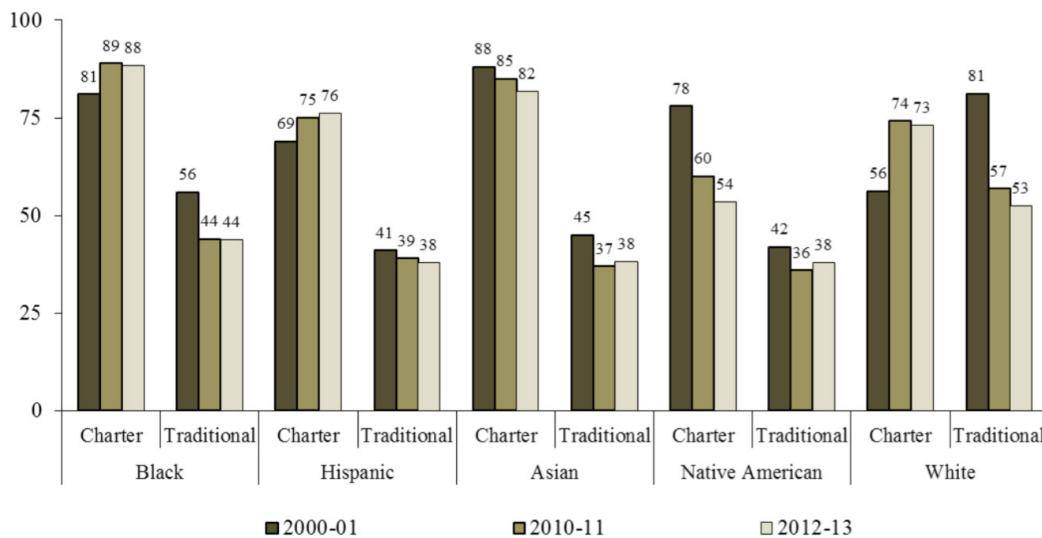
Source: Computed from Minnesota Department of Education data.  
 Predominantly White: non-white student share < 20%; Non-white Segregated: non-white student share > 60%;  
 Integrated: non-white student share between 20% and 60%.

of their students of color, like traditional schools must if they have a high percentage of minority students (Magan, 2017). This ideology is absurd. Why wouldn't they want to if the topic is centered around improving the education of their students? Their reasoning of parents choosing to send their child to the charter school is as loose as cannons were during the American Revolution (Magan, 2017). It has been noted that there seems to be a correlation between racial capitalism and charter schools. Some charters only allow specific minority students to attend. This intentional segregation is an obvious example of racial capitalism. Some say the specifically racially segregated charter schools are very effective, but those schools are the exceptions. Parents should want their children to have access to other children's experiences, thoughts, friendships, among many other things. Having purposely racially segregated schools hinders children from these experiences and opportunities for growth (Magan, 2017). The Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity at the University of Minnesota found that charter school students of all races in the Twin Cities area are much more likely to be at segregated schools than traditional school students. Students transferring to charter schools are the cause of the fifty to sixty percent decline of enrollment in Minneapolis- St. Paul traditional schools. This decline in enrollment has caused repeated budget crises in the last decade for MSP traditional school districts (Minnesota, 2013).

The table below illustrates the percentage of students in segregated school settings broken down by race and school type. In the school year 2012-2013 the number of black students in charter schools that were racially segregated was eighty-eight percent. Compared to white students that were attending charter schools, seventy-three percent of them were racially segregated. Compare both of those statistics with traditional schools. Forty-four percent of black students in traditional schools were in racially segregated schools, that is a forty-four percent difference. For white students, fifty-three of the students in traditional schools were racially segregated. That is a twenty percent difference. This table makes it easy to see how racially segregated traditional schools are, and even more so how racially segregated charter schools are.

Low income families are all clumped together with the formation of ghettos based on how the PHI and PEC influenced the government to put all affordable housing together in the same area in Minneapolis and St. Paul. Schools were then built where needed and since there are a lot of children residing in affordable housing, schools were built there. These schools are comprised of students with low income families, which means that these schools are underfunded because there are not any wealthy families to help fund these schools through taxation. The lack of funding alone promotes neighborhood, school program, class-based, ethnic, and racial segregation of school districts. The wealthy families want their

**Chart 2: Percentage of Students in Segregated School Settings by Race and School Type, 2000 - 2013**

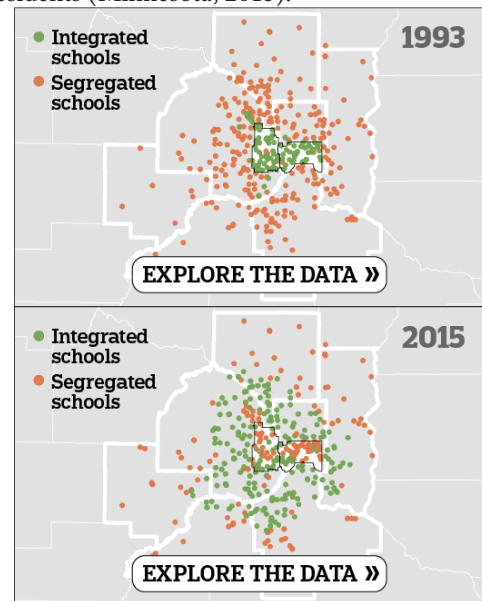


Source: Computed from Minnesota Department of Education data. "Segregated setting" is defined as non-white segregated schools for students of color and predominantly white schools for white students.

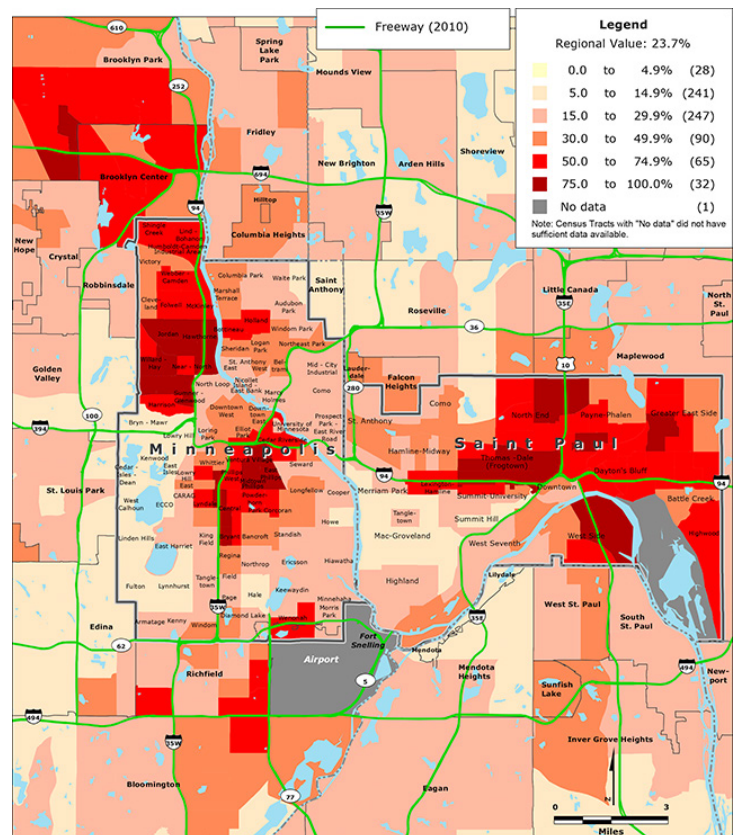
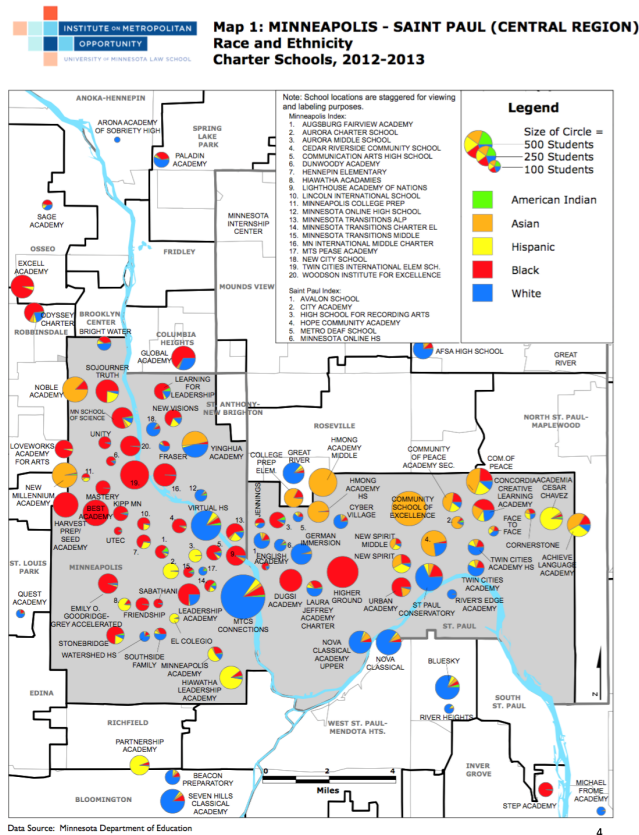
children to have a superior education, so they live in areas with exceptional educational programs, which receive much more funding. Open enrollment has also increased the amount of segregation in school districts. Parents can choose to make a short drive to a nearby suburb where funds are higher for the schools and the education is of a higher level compared to the inner-city schools. Open enrollment creates even less funding for inner-city schools. Inner-city schools have lost funding from charter schools, residential racial segregation, and open enrollment for schooling. An analysis of racial and economic effects show that open enrollment increased segregation overall, with the trend increasing over time. Open enrollment resulted in substantial losses of students from large city districts to nearby districts, which facilitated a pattern of racial transition in certain inner and middle suburban districts— white students moved to predominantly white schools (Minnesota, 2015). Comparing charter school racial segregation with residential segregation, the following two maps show the correlation between the two.

The dark red circles on the left map show charter schools that are predominantly black. Those circles are correlated with the dark red areas on the right map, which show the residential racial segregation of the Twin Cities. To reinforce the issue of racial segregation

South St. Paul, Eagan, and Mounds View have twenty to thirty percent non-white students at their schools, while looking at the residential racial segregation map, all of these cities have a racial segregation percentage of between fifteen to thirty percent minority residents (Minnesota, 2015).



The above two pictures illustrate the change of segregated schools changing locations from 1993 to 2015. In 1993 most segregated schools were outside of Minneapolis/St. Paul school districts. However now from data in 2015, integrated schools are all outside of the Twin Cities while the segregated schools are now inside of the Twin Cities. This switch is



due to open enrollment, residential racial segregation, funding issues, and level of educational opportunities offered at schools in the Twin Cities and those just outside of the Twin Cities.

Minnesota was at the forefront of progressive civil rights movements in the 1960s through the middle of the 1980s. However, the Poverty Housing Industry (PHI) and the Poverty Education Complex (PEC) started to gain momentum in the middle of the 1980s and pushed for the affordable housing offered in Minnesota to all be located in the same area and created ghettos in Minneapolis and St. Paul. The PHI and PEC depend on racial segregation and these two organizations helped to put an end to Minnesota being known as a progressive civil rights state (Minnesota, 2015). Racial segregation in schools has jumped from eighty-three schools being over ninety percent minority in 2010 to now over two hundred schools being over ninety percent minority in 2017. This is an increase of over two hundred forty percent in the last seven years alone. With this rapid growth, this is promoting class based, racial, and ethnic discrimination because these children are not receiving as good of an education as they deserve due to underfunding, open enrollment, residential racial segregation, PHI, PEC, charter schools, and the geography of school districts. This segregation in turn enhances and reinforces these communities to feel outcaste and segregated against. With their education being less than mediocre, many children find going to school to be pointless. When children grow up with feeling discriminated against, they are slow to trust the justice system to do its job (Minnesota, 2015). These children feel as though equality and social justice is out of their reach because they're "just another

poorly educated African American" (Magan, 2017).

However, not everything is all bad. The new Every Student Succeeds Act is making much better strides to hold school districts accountable for the education of their students (United States). Also, under governor Mark Dayton, Minnesota education spending growth has grown by about two billion dollars a year when adjusted for inflation. This additional funding has helped fund early childhood education and all-day kindergarten which improves the quality of the education children receive from their schools (Magan, 2017).

The Institute on Race and Poverty created a map of a hypothetical reconfiguration of the school districts in the Twin Cities area. The map is on the next page with a table that gives the percentages of the amount of minority students that would be in each district. They range from twenty-nine to thirty six percent which would be a drastic improvement on many levels. This improvement allows all children to be a part of an integrated school district. They then get to learn from other students with different experiences, thoughts, friendships, languages, and many other things. This reconfiguration will also help fix the funding issue in Minneapolis/St. Paul. All districts have the wealth distributed relatively evenly allowing all districts to be properly funded so all students can receive the education that they deserve. This reconfiguration is also a great step to hinder racial capitalism in the Twin Cities by the wealth distribution and allowing all students, including minorities, to have access to great and equal educational opportunities. This plan also includes the elimination of charter schools. There are a few crown jewels of charter schools, but the overwhelming majority underperform and cause funding issues for the Twin Cities school districts.

**Table 1**  
**Twin City School District Racial Shares, 2008**

Percentage of Students <u>Non-white</u>	Number of <u>Districts</u>	<u>Districts</u>
70-100	3	St. Paul, Brooklyn Center, Minneapolis
40-70	4	Columbia Heights, Richfield, Robbinsdale, Osseo
30-40	8	Fridley, Bloomington, West St. Paul/Mendota Heights/Eagan, St. Louis Park, Roseville, Burnsville, North St. Paul/Maplewood, Shakopee
20-30	8	Hopkins, South St. Paul, Spring Lake Park, Inver Grove Heights, Eden Prairie, Mounds View, South Washington, Rosemount/Apple Valley/Eagan

Source: Minnesota Department of Education.

This reconfiguration is a great proposition to fix the racial segregation of school districts for all the previous reasons. This proposal is one of the first reconfigurations of the school districts that is feasible and would solve all the issues in the Twin Cities metropolitan area school districts: funding, segregation, inadequate educational and extra-curricular opportunities. All students would have adequate access to proper education and extra-curricular activities. After school programs, would also become more available to low-income family students helping them to stay on track with school. This kind of reconfiguration would help put Minnesota back on the map of being a progressive civil rights state and create a model for other metropolitan cities to follow (Minnesota, 2009).

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