

Education Policy and Reform in the State of Oklahoma after 1950 and
The Achievement Gaps of Underserved Student Populations

By Meghan Nicole Nguyen

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty in partial
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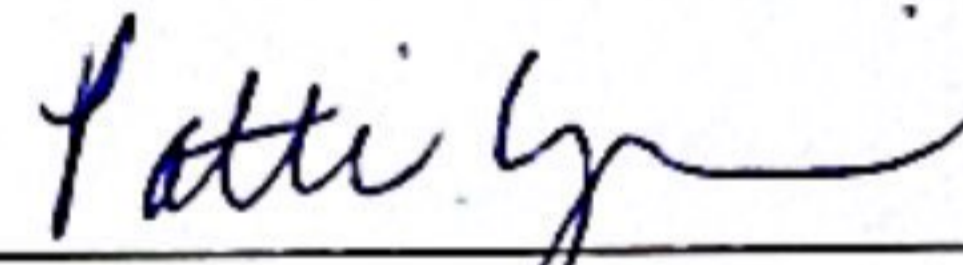
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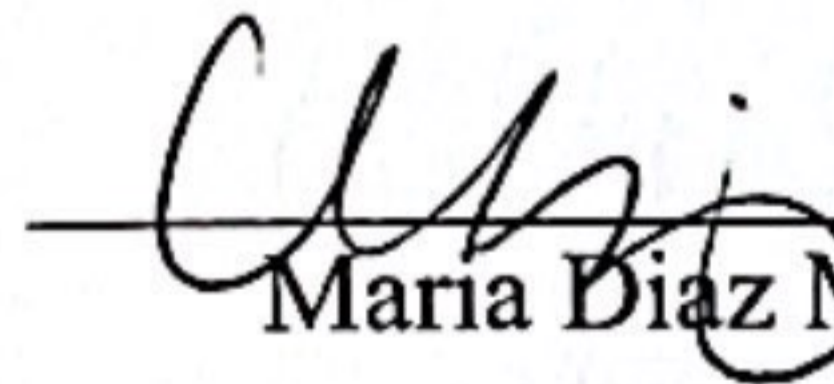
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Introduction

Equitable education policy and reform is my passion and lifelong goal. As a special education educator in the state of Oklahoma, I strive to provide a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students from all backgrounds. When embarking on the graduate program in history at the University of Central Oklahoma and determining what I wanted to research for my thesis, there was no doubt in my mind that the topic had to revolve around the history of education. Research questions guided me to narrow my focus down to the causes and effects of unequal educational achievement outcomes for different student demographics which led to a deep dive into policy and reform initiatives. I argue that through the past seven decades of policy and reform, we can see what systemic damage has been done to our public education system concerning the outcomes of underserved student populations. Examples of this policy are seen through people movements such as “white flight” in the 1960s and 70s, along with the privatization of education which continues to this day. Therefore, by analyzing these past reforms, we better understand what can be done to bring about equitable educational outcomes through state reform and policy for the future.

This thesis is divided into five different chapters. Each chapter is then divided into subcategories of thematic ideas. Most chapters have charts, graphs, or photos that can be found at the end of the text in the Appendix section. These figures give an important visual description of topics and figures provided in the text. I have used footnotes to cite important information and quotes along with citations in the bibliography at the end of the thesis.

When discussing underserved populations in relationship to public education reform and policy we must first define who these underserved populations are. Students in this underserved category include but are not limited to ethnic minorities by population, students living in poverty

or experiencing homelessness, students of the LGBTQIA2S+ community, special education students with learning differences, gifted and talented students, and ELL/ESL students. These are the student populations that are most directly affected negatively by educational policies and reforms from the past seven decades and continue to show gaps in achievement outcomes.

Chapter One analyzes the historiography of education reform and policy from the 1950s to today. Since educational changes stem from multiple different angles and ideologies, this chapter is a study of how those different researchers in different fields discuss education reform within their area of expertise. These researchers include historians, educators, investigative journalists, sociologists, and economists. Understanding the sheer complexity of education reform and who is researching the subject matter was vital to comprehending the whole picture. These secondarily literary sources gave insight into methodologies as well as past historical reforms and outcomes across America.

Chapter Two consists of an overview of federal reform changes that occurred between 1960 to the early 2000s, along with the effect on underserved student populations. While the individual states still hold the most power regarding education policy, the national rhetoric surrounding education sways what decisions are being made for students and districts around the country. I argue that it is clear the federal policy put into place is not only failing students but directly negatively impacting students of color and socioeconomic status. This discussion revolves around the different ideologies of past reformers and the outcomes of those initiatives rather than the micro-history of Oklahoma itself.

Chapter Three is a deep dive into micro-history through the specific geographical area of Oklahoma City and Edmond, Oklahoma in the 1960s. During desegregation the research clearly shows a mass migration of white middle-class citizens fleeing the urban center of OKC and

moving to previous sundown towns suburbs like Edmond. This “white flight” migration has disastrous effects on the urban community and schools as well as unintended consequences for the surrounding suburbs. Through state legislation, district policy, and the migration patterns of white Oklahoma residents, the research shows how ethnic minority communities were harmed educationally. This chapter analyzes the integration policies created and what the outcomes were for both suburban and urban school districts.

Chapter Four is a continuation of Chapter Three in that one of the outcomes of integration was the privatization of schools in Oklahoma. In this chapter, the research is focused on the economics and outcomes of the privatization of schools for students and communities of color. In addition to the economic outcomes of privatization, I review the state policy that was and is continuing to be created to allow these types of institutions to run in the state of Oklahoma. Instead of asking if the institutions are “good” or “bad” for students, it is more imperative to ask if it furthers equality in educational standards and excellence for all students. Investigative journalists have been tackling this question for decades at the start of privatization and the controversies that surround them legally. While under the guise of “reform” and improvement for our schools, the past forty years have shown that privatization further segregated education for ethnically minority students and those in lower economic classes.

Chapter Five takes a positive turn and looks at future policy and reform through one of the greatest educational equalizers, literacy. From all of my research done on education policy and reform there are so many factors that can’t be solved from the purely educational viewpoint, like poverty, housing zones, and district administration overspending. But one avenue of reform that can be changed is the implementation of the Science of Reading methodologies into classrooms. As a dyslexic person who was taught to read using the Whole Language curriculum,

this matter is near and dear to my heart. About fifteen to twenty percent of the population shows signs of dyslexia whereas less than four percent of students are labeled as such. This means we are grossly underdiagnosing reading learning differences in schools which leads to students needing out of school tutoring and help with literacy. Ending my thesis with the importance of literacy as the great educational equalizer made sense to me when talking about underserved student outcomes and policy reform.

My hope is that this thesis research can shed light on the state of Oklahoma and our public education system today. May future policy makers, educators, and historians read this and truly understand what equitable education for all means and how historically we have failed our students in so many ways. My hope resides in the words of Amanda Gorman and the inaugural poem she gave entitled “The Hill We Climb.”

“Somehow we’ve weathered and witnessed a nation that isn’t broken but simply unfinished...”

Some may say our public education system is broken, but I hope to believe that it is simply unfinished.

Chapter 1

Historiography of Education Reform and Policy Since 1950

Introduction

Education reform and policy has been a political and governmental issue for over a century and policy continues to make national headlines today. Since the first public “common” schools were opened to children in the early 19th century, education has seen multiple shifts within a social, political, and historical context. Before understanding the perspectives of individual researchers or historians and the analytical conclusions they write about, there must first be an understanding of the purpose of education throughout the eras of history and why they have collectively changed at these specific times.

Massachusetts was the first state to enact state-wide educational policy by issuing a mandatory attendance law for elementary school aged children in 1852. Until this time, education was usually reserved for the upper class and most children were educated at home. The purpose of this law was to encourage families, specifically in rural areas, to embrace educating their children specifically in arithmetic and reading for the betterment of society as a whole. Several states jumped on board with the idea of a government funded education system and encouraged white citizens to take advantage of this opportunity. A clarification must be made here, it was at this time still illegal to teach an enslaved person how to read and write. Education was clearly not available nor encouraged for everyone.¹

Passing through the Civil War and Reconstruction, the era of the Jim Crow South with segregated common schools brought a new purpose for the education system. With immigration

¹ Nancy Kober, *History and Evolution of Public Education in the US* (Center for Education Policy, 2020) <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED606970.pdf>, 1-2; State of Alabama, “Selections from Alabama's Laws Governing Slaves,” *SHEC: Resources for Teachers*, accessed July 15, 2023.

at an all-time high between 1880 and 1930, the schools were tasked with teaching reading, writing, arithmetic, and citizenship. Writers of the day, emphasized the importance of educating the immigrant population to promote national unity. American nationalism was the top priority in urban centers and the writings of the day were about the struggle of educating the immigrants to mold them into an American identity.²

After WWII the education conversation changed yet again to one of funding on a national and state level, as well as the need for rigorous education and licensing for teachers as a profession. This conversation happened while massive civil rights changes were affecting society and education policy. The end of segregated schools in 1954 brought about by *Brown v. Board of Education*, systematically changed the rhetoric surrounding school policy. White flight from urban centers across the U.S. initiated a fundamental shift in the privatization of schools and new ideas of “parent choice” and “freedom of association.” This was in total opposition to state laws just a hundred years prior. Historians and researchers at this time look at the effects of racial integration on schools with comparisons to previous decades of education inclusion, which was seen with immigration.³

Starting in the 1980s, yet another dramatic shift in educational research and policy started with the debates on standardization. During this decade, states started to create and enact standardized tests that could be given to students for data collection on American education achievement. With *No Child Left Behind* in 2002, standardized tests became federally mandated across the country and states were tasked with creating state standards for the use of educators and curriculum developers. The age of data driven school policy and the researchers were writing about the failures of our public education system and the need for standardization for

² Kober, *History and Evolution of Public Education in the US*, 3-4.

³ Kober, *History and Evolution of Public Education in the US*, 5-6; Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 161-179.

equality in school achievement outcomes. Today, these data sets are still utilized by education researchers and policymakers to reform the education system, but for what purpose? Herein lies the research question: How has policy since the 1950s helped or harmed our underserved student populations in the public education system? These students might be students of color, impoverished students, special education students, or other outlying populations like the LGBTQ+ community. What types of social changes through this time period have contributed to education rhetoric circulating through governmental bodies together with researchers and what has been the outcome of such conversations? Since there is a multitude of data collected on students, my research is focused on student achievement outcomes and the achievement gap that has been growing for underserved students for decades.

While the detailed chronological order above gives a brief overview of historical changes and the writings produced by researchers of these time periods, the remainder of the analyzed historiography will follow a more thematic approach. Considering the research questions refer to just a sliver of historic time frames, plus the abundance of literature and sources from vastly different topics, it seems appropriate to group writers and experts based on themes instead of chronologically.

Policy and Race

The largest theme that helps to answer the research questions are those of race and ethnic studies. Researchers such as Bill Strickland, Geoffrey Canada, and Robert Balfanz take a cultural and racial approach to their research findings. They look at ethnicity, socioeconomic, and generational issues from the past fifty years when looking for solutions to student outcomes, and graduation dropout rates. This approach is harder to pinpoint exact solutions since the issues are

systematically deeply rooted in American culture and society. Stickland is an author and civil activist. Canada is a policy advocate and was the CEO of Harlem Children’s Zone (HCZ), an association that drives to promote social mobility and prosperity to minority communities by breaking generational poverty through education. Balfanz is a PhD research professor at the Center for the Social Organization of Schools at Johns Hopkins University School of Education, where he is currently the director of the Everyone Graduates Center. Together, these researchers all argue that school policy and the current public school system in place has in fact harmed students of color. The systemic social issues surrounding race make equality, although sounding like a solution, not what is needed for true education reform. These researches argue that we would be looking at equity instead of equality since our students are coming from vastly different backgrounds and social situations. This type of argument against the public school system, current policy, and ideas for out of the box privatization of schools have led to the ideas of deconstructing the public school system in order to achieve equity for all students.⁴

Waiting for Superman, a documentary released in 2010, highlighted interviews from these researchers to invoke outrage from the mass public about the state of public education while promoting privatization through magnet and charter schools. In the documentary the interviews given are powerful testimonies of the failings of public education, while making charter and magnet schools look like the utopian solution. Through this documentary they leave out the current research that has been done on the community and educational issues of charter and magnet schools. They also do not discuss the patterns of state aid going to these privatized schools while being taken from the public school system. A critique could be that the ideas from

⁴ William Strickland, “The Pittsburgh Foundation, Board of Directors,” accessed Feb 22, 2024, <https://pittsburghfoundation.org/node/43828>; Geoffrey Canada, “Harlem Children’s Zone, Back to Leadership & Trustees,” accessed Feb 22, 2024, <https://hcz.org/about-us/leadership/geoffrey-canada/>; Robert Balfanz, “Center for Education Policy Research, Harvard University, People,” accessed Feb 22, 2024, <https://cepr.harvard.edu/people/robert-balfanz>.

their research presented make the solution to education equality look easy, however the research shows the drawbacks and devastating effects of privatization on public education.⁵

Historian Monroe Billing, sociologist David Gillborn, and education scholar Sonya Douglass are active in the field of educational research specifically through the lens of ethnic educational inequalities and achievement outcomes.⁶ They are all three newer researchers than those previously mentioned, but are writing academic papers, journals, and books that surround the issues of education policy and race. All three of them argue that past and current education reforms have continued to have adverse effects on ethnic minorities. Gillborn's research also includes England in his paper "Racism as Policy: A Critical Race Analysis of Education Reforms in the United States and England," from *The Educational Forum*.⁷ These three researchers have more current and advanced methodologies of looking at education data and policy reform than some of the more seasoned researchers mentioned previously. Looking through their work was instrumental in building my own research techniques and narrowing down the research questions I posed to answer specifically about Oklahoma policy.

Arguments on Privatization

Two researchers who would disagree with Bill Strickland, Geoffrey Canada, and Robert Balfanz about the privatization solution are Diane Ravitch and Valerie Strauss. Ravitch is a

⁵ *Waiting for Superman*, directed by Davis Guggenheim (2010; Hollywood: Paramount Vantage, Participant Media, and Walden Media), accessed June 10, 2022, <https://www.amazon.com/Amazon-Video>. *Waiting for Superman* is a documentary film featuring interviews of Strickland, Canada, and Balfanz.

⁶ Monroe Billington, "Public School Integration in Oklahoma, 1954-1963," *The Historian* 26, no.4 (1964): 521-537, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24442556>; David Gillborn, "Racism as Policy: A Critical Race Analysis of Education Reforms in the United States and England," *The Educational Forum*, 78:1, (2014): 26-41, DOI: [10.1080/00131725.2014.850982](https://doi.org/10.1080/00131725.2014.850982); Sonya Horsford Douglass, "A Race to the Top From the Bottom of the Well? The Paradox of Race and U.S. Education Reform," *The Educational Forum*, 81:2 (2-17): 136-147, DOI: [10.1080/00131725.2017.1280754](https://doi.org/10.1080/00131725.2017.1280754).

⁷ David Gillborn, "Racism as Policy: A Critical Race Analysis of Education Reforms in the United States and England," *The Educational Forum*, 78:1 (2014): 26-41, DOI: [10.1080/00131725.2014.850982](https://doi.org/10.1080/00131725.2014.850982).

historian who has dedicated her life to education research and was a Research Professor of Education at New York University. Stauss has been an educational journalist and writer for the Washington Post for over thirty years and specializes in investigative journalism on the privatization of charter schools in urban areas.

Both Ravitch and Strauss have completed extensive research on the rise of privatization in education plus the federal government policies that made it possible along with harmful outcomes for students, teachers, and the public school system in general. They both have blog sites, continue to publish books, and published journal articles on the topic of failed privatization and how this type of reform is critically harmful to the ideologies of universal public education. They argue that privatization has not only harmed funding for public school districts, but have also uncovered how privatization has hurt underserved communities in general. They both take a multifaceted approach at educational reform and research by looking at economics as well as social and racial issues.⁸

Another popular researcher who has caused some stir and contention of ideas, is Alfie Kohn. While being outspoken against privatization, he is also one of the more controversial figures pertaining to his ideas about human behavior, parenting, and the education of children. He has written fourteen books about his theories and research on child development and human behavior, including internal motivation and how we achieve it. Kohn's ideas about classroom management are probably the most controversial among the public with published books such as *Feel Bad Education*, *Punished by Rewards*, and *Beyond Discipline*.⁹

⁸ Diane Ravitch, "About," Personal Blog Website, accessed: March 11, 2023; Diane Ravitch, *Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools* (New York: Random House, 2014); Diane Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath: The Passionate Resistance to Privatization and the Fight to Save America's Public Schools* (New York: Random House, 2020); Valerie Strauss, "The Answer Sheet Blog," Washington Post, accessed March 11, 2023.

⁹ Alfie Kohn, *Feel-Bad Education: And Other Contrarian Essays on Children and Schooling* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011); Alfie Kohn, *Punished by Rewards: The Trouble with Gold Stars, Incentive Plans, A's, Praise, and other*

John Merrow, an American journalist and broadcaster who has been reporting on educational reform since 1970 and takes a racial and socioeconomic approach through a political and investigative stance. Interestingly enough John Merrow, while authoring many education reform books, has from time to time switched his stance on public education and reform. He could possibly be considered a revisionist of his own ideas and works. Specifically, when privatization became popular under the guise of “school choice” in the 1980s, Merrow was a proponent of privatization. In the early 2000s disastrous results of privatization were starting to become apparent to researchers and Merrow changed his stance on the subject and spoke out against taking public funds for private schools through programs such as vouchers and charter programs. Merrow is a great example of an idealistic approach to innovation or experimentation when it comes to educational policy and reform. Since he has written for so long and so often, we can see these shifts in research and outcomes through the decades based on how they developed through his published writings. One could also applaud Merrow’s courage to continue to write and publish his ideas even though they changed over time. Researchers should all note that arguments and positions can and should be challenged with time and new updated finding.¹⁰

These scholars and researchers have witnessed firsthand the federal policies from the 1970s to today that have pushed privatization onto state and district public schools. Diane Ravitch, while sending her own children to private schools, was simultaneously researching the student outcomes and failings of privatization across the nation.¹¹ Other researchers have not taken the steps that John Merrow succumbed to with his change in opinion on privatization.

Bribes (New York: Mariner Books, 1999); Alfie Kohn, *Beyond Discipline: From Compliance to Community* (Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development ASCD, 2006).

¹⁰ John Merrow, *Addicted to Reform: A 12-Step Program to Rescue Public Education*, (New York: New Street Press, 2017); Jeffrey Brown, “Why Education Reform Keeps Failing Students,” (video of PBS NewsHour, October 17, 2017), accessed March 22, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lOfioQR6WTI>; John Merrow, *Below C Level: How American Education Encourages Mediocrity and What We Can Do About It* (Scotts Valley, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2010).

¹¹ Diane Ravitch, “About” personal blog website, accessed March 11, 2023, <https://dianeravitch.com/about-diane/>.

Those still regard privatization as the only way to save education in America at the pure expense of public schools. John Merrow was also the journalist that exposed the cheating scandal in Washington, DC charter schools.¹² His journalism has been essential to my research on the progression of privatization and achievement outcomes for minority student populations. These researchers disprove modernist ideals that things in reform and policy would only continue to make the situation better through chronological time, and have argued the opposite.

An Economist's Perspective

Researchers and writers such as Marguerite Roza and Eric Hanushek look at the issues facing the public school system through an economist's eyes. This type of quantitative historical research was instrumental for arguments against needing more funds for education, but a vital insight into the mismanagement of funds within the system. For these researchers and others like them, the system's financial setup is argued to be the main cause of public spending versus poor student outcomes. Compared to the lack of funding which dominates political rhetoric and policy debates. This quantitative research of Roza's has uncovered the issues of intra-district inequalities which continue to affect student outcomes specifically in districts with high ethnic minority populations. Roza and Hanushek offer creative solutions on how to fix the economics behind school systems on the district and national level, while including the larger implications of our country's global economy if changes aren't made soon.¹³

Inclusion of the Excluded (Sped/LGBTQ+)

¹² Diane Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath: The Passionate Resistance to Privatization and the Fight to Save America's Public Schools* (New York: Random House, 2020), 48, 87.

¹³ Marguerite Roza, *Educational Economics: Where do School Funds Go?* (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press, 2010), 4; *Waiting for Superman*, directed by Davis Guggenheim (2010; Hollywood: Paramount Vantage, Participant Media, and Walden Media), accessed June 10, 2022, <https://www.amazon.com/Amazon-Video>.

Although my research has primarily focused on underserved students identified by ethnicity or socioeconomic class, that doesn't include all minorities in our classrooms. If we take a look at the educational system for all students we must also consider other, often overlooked, demographics of students. For example students who are in special education or those students who are members of the LGBTQ+ community. Even gifted and talented, or advanced students could be classified in this underserved student population. Kate Averett takes these students into consideration while examining the Texas Homeschool population as a causality of privatization. Averett found a new diversifying demographic of homeschooling families compared to that of decades previous. Her book relied heavily on direct interviews with homeschooled parents and students who were attending homeschool conventions in Texas. Her findings of a growing diversity of home educated students is a testament to growing concern over student safety and inclusion within public school buildings. While I used her research mostly to gain more understanding of privatization and the effects on the public educational system, her findings of the diversifying demographics that are in current changes would be a fascinating research topic for a sociologist. While it specifically does not add a huge amount of consequence to my topic, I appreciated the inclusion of this change over time.¹⁴

Margret Winzer and Laura Schifter both are professors of education and specialize in topics concerning special education and those students with learning differences. Winzer has researched as a historian, and looked at the past integration of children with disabilities away from institutional care into public education. The topic of desegregation when it comes to special education isn't one widely discussed or researched. I found Winzer's books fascinating and very insightful pertaining to national policy change during times of broader social movements. On the

¹⁴ Kate Henley Averett, *The Homeschool Choice: Parents and the Privatization of Education (Critical Perspectives on Youth)* (New York: New York University Press, 2021).

other hand, Schifter relates special education populations to the connection to socioeconomics. Her connections are poignant and speak much to the parallels between demographics of low-achieving student populations and poverty rates. We could continue this parallel even further to include low-performing schools with high poverty rates, geographically speaking. Schifter's ties to the identification of special education populations and the patterns we are seeing from past decades is angering to read about but imperative to acknowledge. Both Winzer and Schifter are continuing to do impactful research on special education and if I had the opportunity to add to my thesis it would include a chapter dedicated to trends in special education.¹⁵

Literacy and Reading

Living in the information age means that the tool of choice for advancement in social status and for generational well being is through literacy. Every president since the 1960s has mentioned the importance of reading and writing achievements while not acknowledging the science developed behind how we learn to read. Considering that scientists, journalists, historians, sociologists, and teachers have all been talking about the science of reading for decades it seems to have fallen on deaf political ears and escaped political rhetoric.

Researchers such as Natalie Wexler who wrote *The Knowledge Gap*, and co-created *The Writing Revolution* teacher training curriculum, has been an outspoken advocate for the science of reading and content rich writing for American students.¹⁶ E.D. Hirsch Jr., chairperson for the Core of Knowledge, has gone as far to compile lists of expected general background knowledge

¹⁵ Margret A. Winzer, *The History of Special Education: From Isolation to Integration*, (Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 1993), 92-93; Laura A. Schifter, "Students from Low-Income Families and Special Education," *The Century Foundation*, (January 17, 2019), <https://tcf.org/content/report/students-low-income-families-special-education/>.

¹⁶ Natalie Wexler, *The Knowledge Gap: The Hidden Cause of America's Broken Education System and How to Fix It* (New York: Avery, 2019), *The Writing Revolution*, "Research," accessed July 5, 2023, <https://www.thewritingrevolution.org/method/research/>.

for students to be successful in school, only to be criticized as a progressive left-winged hinchman.¹⁷ These researchers argue that the vocabulary and background knowledge deficiency we see in students from impoverished homes, ethnic minorities, and ELL students are continuing to contribute to a widening gap of achievement and reading fluency. Wexler’s solution is a standardized systematic reading and writing instructional program, nationwide, that focuses on phonics, vocabulary building, which is content rich in history and science. Nonprofits, like “LearnUp” from San Francisco and its founder Steve Tattum, have been training students in the science of reading and explicit phonic instruction for decades. Kareem Weaver, an NAACP education committee director, worked with teachers and the school board to implement a Science of Reading curriculum for more equitable education opportunities for ELL students and ethnic minorities. His newest endeavor in 2023, was creating “The Right To Read” film to bring public awareness to this decades-long crisis.¹⁸ On the other hand, Lucy Calkins, the author of the “Units of Study” Curriculum, has been a powerful rival of Science of Reading and instead promotes “whole language.” Her curriculum, which had been forcefully implemented across the U.S. as the K-8th curriculum of choice, has continued to contribute to our student’s decline in literacy and spelling competency for decades.¹⁹ In the reading wars, Lucy Calkins along with Rudolf Flesch and Frank Smith were some of the most outspoken about teaching reading through “whole language” and not phonologically like Tattum and Wexler.²⁰ Although there have been

¹⁷ Core Knowledge, “E.D. Hirsch, Jr.,” accessed July 18, 2023, <https://www.coreknowledge.org/about-us/e-d-hirsch-jr/>.

¹⁸ *The Right To Read*, directed by Jenny Mackenzie (2023; Los Angeles: Levar Burton Entertainment) accessed July 14, 2023, <https://www.therighttoreadfilm.org/>.

¹⁹ Goldstein, Dana. “*In the Fight Over How to Teach Reading, This Guru Makes a Major Retreat*,” New York Times, May 22, 2022, accessed June 18, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/22/us/reading-teaching-curriculum-phonics.html>; “Units of Study,” accessed July 1, 2023, <https://www.unitsofstudy.com/>.

²⁰ Wexler, *The Knowledge Gap*, 69.

vast differences of opinions on *how* to teach reading, there has never been an argument about the importance of reading itself and its need for improvement within schools.

Counterview

Since it is important to ethically research all viewpoints and not cherry pick sources I also read a few conflicting books and articles. One of the most critical of my arguments would have been by Pete Hegseth and David Goodwin.²¹ Their book is a tribute to conservative, right wing ideologies of a progressive takeover. Their emotional writing stemming from fear of left wing oppression was tangible while reading and they successfully used threatened nationalistic pride as a source of educational downfall. Hegseth is a Fox News Host as well as a military veteran. Goodwin has a MBA and in the early 2000s started his own Classical Christian school in Idaho. Together they have identified the educational issues as a degradation of morals, lack of classical language training, and too many progressive ideologies. Their research focuses on social consequences of poor education policy, but has little to do with achievement gaps nor a need for educational equity. Hegseth and Goodwin are not alone in their ideas and research on education policy and parental choice. Other outspoken advocates in our own state would be the current Secretary of Education, Ryan Walters, and his crusade for “liberal” book bannings and a K-12 History curriculum provided by PragerU. This website with free educational video content is self identified as a solution to “left winged ideology” in education.²² These counterviews could be deconstructive when it comes to researching policy since the arguments turn education reform into a political battle of conservatives against liberals, instead of actually trying to find a solution for equitable education access in America.

²¹ Pete Hegseth, with David Goodwin, *Battle For The American Mind: Uprooting a Century of Miseducation* (New York, Harper Collins Publishers), 2022.

²² PragerU, “About” Page, accessed December 7, 2023, <https://www.prageru.com/about>.

Contribution and Conclusion

While the discussion about education reform should not revolve around ideas of who is right or wrong, the data makes it hard to disprove that the current system we have is not working for all students. My historical research, with a focus on Oklahoma, will bring new light to our state's policies. As we zoom in on historical events and rhetoric of the Edmond School District and Oklahoma City School District during the 1960s white flight era, we might peek into the causes of issues we see today in our state. Through state policy and education reform we can create equitable education opportunities while breaking the curse of systemic generational poverty and illiteracy.

Can we gain new insight to policies made long ago that would explain our achievement outcomes today? This is my purpose and plan of action. There will always be a need for new educational research since our current system is still failing many students. My specific research is needed for the current policy makers and the future of education in Oklahoma because of our unique geography and continued political polarization around education.

Chapter 2

Federal Education Reform in the US after 1950: The Impact of Student Success Across Socioeconomic Divides and Ethnicities

Introduction

The Educational Reform brought about by the federal government after 1950 only perpetuated an already broken system rather than creating the needed change for student success for all students across socioeconomic divides and ethnicities. While educational reform has been on the political agenda for every president since the 1960s debate between Kennedy and Nixon, the federal government has failed to positively influence student outcomes, specifically for those minorities of color and for the economically disadvantaged. Local, national, and global reports all point to the mediocrity of America's education system despite spending more than most industrialized countries on education.²³ Some researchers argue that some national reform is actually a well-played agenda to continue the propaganda of the white elite and prosperity in America.²⁴ Other researchers will say the issues of education reform can be blamed on the financial systems in place and the allotment of money to the high-performing schools by districts.²⁵ We could even say that federal policy isn't doing enough to protect equality of education, as we will find with some of the Supreme Court cases we look into. No matter what side you look at the education crisis from, it is clear the policy put into place is not only failing students but directly negatively impacting students of color and socioeconomic status. All these things, we will dissect to conclude the ramifications of national policy on the minority populations in public education and the failings of national reform.

²³ Jeffrey Brown, "Why Education Reform Keeps Failing Students," (video of PBS NewsHour, October 17, 2017), accessed March 22, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lOfioQR6WTI>; 1:02.

²⁴ Sonya Horsford Douglass, "A Race to the Top from the Bottom of the Well? The Paradox of Race and U.S. Education Reform," *The Educational Forum* 81:2 (April 2017), 136-147, DOI: [10.1080/00131725.2017.1280754](https://doi.org/10.1080/00131725.2017.1280754).

²⁵ Marguerite Roza, *Educational Economics*, 10-12.

Larger Historiographical Literature

Education reform is not only widely debated but is historically wrapped in political and social agendas. A closer look at the researchers who have studied education reform will show that most take a small section of the wider view to explain the issues behind failed reform. Very few who are looking at the broader picture of education reform can offer any real solutions to the mainstream public school system without those ideas being the creation of charter and magnet schools. Why? The bureaucratic system prohibits real change in the public education system, and it is easier to look at one problem and attach a solution to just that one specific problem than take on the whole system at once.²⁶

A Brief History of Education Prior to 1950

Prior to the public education system we have today, the history of education in America points to a simpler time of rural, small town values and the nostalgic one-room schoolhouse. In this model students ranged in ages from six up to thirteen with the older students helping the younger ones. Those children fortunate enough to attend a school, usually white children, could learn to read and write and maybe complete up to an 8th grade education. Less fortunate children would possibly be home educated by a relative, usually the mother or grandmother, in what was called “dame schools.”²⁷ But usually for the poor and underserved populations, children were left to help the family with jobs without much attention to formal education. Before the civil war in the southern states there were anti-literacy laws that outlawed teaching an enslaved person to

²⁶ *Waiting for Superman*, directed by Davis Guggenheim (2010; Hollywood: Paramount Vantage, Participant Media, and Walden Media), accessed June 10, 2022, <https://www.amazon.com/Amazon-Video>, 24:00.

²⁷ Nancy Kober, *History and Evolution of Public Education in the US* (Center for Education Policy, 2020) <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED606970.pdf>, 1-2.

read or write. Although some still managed this task while enslaved, such as Fredrick Douglass, for most enslaved people these laws were just another way to keep them in their place with no hopes of a life outside of slavery. In urban areas, white children of the elite class, were educated by a private family tutor or governess, and in occurrences for a more formal education at a boarding school. Boarding schools were forced onto America's Native American population in hopes of anglicizing them. In the name of cultural integration and religious moral instruction, the indigenous students were forbidden to speak their native languages or practice their traditions.²⁸ This boarding school system for indigenous children has since been criticized for its purpose and tactics along with recent discoveries of mass grave sites and other shady findings. When looking at higher education during this era, in 1800 there were twenty-five universities in America and fewer than 1% of America's population held a college degree.²⁹

The early 19th century saw an emergence of state-funded public schools in urban areas that would replace the use of tutors, governesses, and dame schools. By 1830 about half of America's children ages five to fourteen attended a public school yet by 1870 that percentage rose to 78%.³⁰ This shift in state funded education came out of need due to the growing population in urban centers from migration of rural farmers and immigration.³¹ Rural, southern states were the last to switch to a state funded public school system. These schools gave basic education in the three "R's;" reading, writing, and arithmetic along with a strong emphasis on moral and civic education. The school system was to create a distinction between the two most needed workers for the success of the industrial revolution. The factories of this era in time needed linemen; those who would follow orders and be able to learn a task that would then be

²⁸ "Native Words, Native Warriors," Chapter 3: Boarding Schools, National Museum of the Native American, Smithsonian, <https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360>.

²⁹ ProCon, *History of College Education* Last updated on: January, 14 2021, ProCon.org <https://college-education.procon.org/history-of-college-education/>.

³⁰ Kober, *History and Evolution of Public Education in the US*, 3-4.

³¹ Kober, *History and Evolution of Public Education in the US*, 4.

repetitively completed. The second job was that of the factory manager who needed leadership and critical thinking skills.³² Public schools were the catalyst for separating out those students who might become successful managers and nurturing their growth more than the students who would mostly be destined to be linemen.³³

For the next century society and our economic industry changed, but the public education system and foundational structure did not change. The system of a “one size fits all education” has dominated public schools creating achievement gaps in minority students and lack of confidence in the system. The mid-20th century was a turbulent time in education with desegregation and in implementation of new national reform.³⁴ Unfortunately, the systematic funding and processes for public education only became more complex, confusing, and as we will see, did not improve the broken system for today’s students.

Identifying the Minorities in our Education System

When asked who underserved populations are in America; most people will automatically assume you are referring to ethnic minorities or that demographic of race, with the most common minorities being African Americans and Hispanic.³⁵ Since we are specifically discussing the education system we need to broaden our terms of what it means to be an underserved student in public education. Yes, ethnicity does play a role in the minority discussion and tends to dominate political rhetoric as one of the most discussed topics about achievement gaps and reform for equality. We will also discuss the socioeconomic disadvantaged

³² Bill Watson, “Square Pegs for Round Holes - Why Education Reforms Fail,” TEDxPurdueU, March 2014, 1:58 - 3:50.

³³ *Waiting for Superman*, directed by Davis Guggenheim, 1:06:37 - 1:07:10.

³⁴ Edwin Breeden, et al., “The Affluent Society,” *The American Yawp*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018) Chapter 26, Section III: Race and Education, <https://www.americanyawp.com/text/26-the-affluent-society/>.

³⁵ The term Hispanic will be used as an umbrella term to include populations from Mexico, Central America, and South America as defined by the U.S. Census.

minorities that sometimes get intertwined with minority races, thus making those conversations more complex and hazy at best. Special education students or those students on an IEP or 504 are also considered underserved populations when discussing education reform and policy and require different consideration from the local, state, and national agencies. Another group which is included in the term underserved when talking about education reform is our ESL/ELL (English as a Second Language/English Language Learners) who speak a different language than English as their first language. Ethnic minorities are also sometimes classified as ELL students or special education students in larger percentages than their white counterparts. The LGBTQ+ community is another underserved community of students that continues to get pushed to the side by specifically local district and state education reform. We will be discussing all categories of underserved student populations in more depth.

What Defines Policy

Before talking about the policies and reforms that have shaped our public education system, we must first define what policy is and the context in which I will use it. Most think policy is local, state, or national government legislation that would give specific laws and regulations on actions. But as Stephen Ball, an internationally leading education policy scholar describes, it could also be anything that influences people in a certain belief.³⁶ Paths of influence could be speeches, reports, texts, bills that don't become laws, supreme court cases, or even political agendas and rhetoric. Ball calls these "little p policies" because ideas and influence from them enter into public opinion and reform conversations while still being informal in nature.³⁷ This idea of "little p policy" takes into a wide array of debate, research and opens the

³⁶ Gillborn, "Racism as Policy," 27-28.

³⁷ Gillborn, "Racism as Policy," 28.

dialog to more than just passed laws. It is important to recognize these informal means as part of policy for emphasizing that policy is progressive, ever changing, and contested even among scholars. Ball states:

“... we need to remain aware that policies are made and remade in many sites, and there are many little-p policies that are formed and enacted within localities and institutions ... policy that is “announced” through legislation is also reproduced and reworked over time through reports, speeches, “moves,” “agendas” and so on. ... Policies are contested, interpreted and enacted in a variety of arenas of practice and the rhetorics, texts and meanings of policy makers do not always translate directly and obviously into institutional practices.”³⁸

Specifically, for this chapter, I will be talking about policy that is important to CRT, socioeconomic, or other categories of minority distinctions in educational reform. Although there are many Supreme Court cases and legislation about educational practices that won't be specifically mentioned here because they don't directly relate to the topics discussed. I would also like to acknowledge that the public school system as a whole is disappointing the majority of our students, not just these minorities discussed here. Acknowledging the complexity of education policy and reform is an important first step in trying to grasp the larger picture as to why our public education system is failing our students.

National Reform from 1950 through 2015

³⁸ Gillborn, “Racism as Policy,” 28.

Understanding our government's inner workings and the reliance on the constitution as the basis for all national reform is important to understanding our failed national reform. Before we can talk about specific policy and reform that shaped our current education system we must understand why the system is decentralized from our national government. While federal reform across all fifty states to provide equality to all students is ideal, the right to education isn't specifically written in our United States Constitution.³⁹ This puts the majority of the burden and responsibility of free and equal education on the individual states and not the federal government. Decentralization is critical when looking at national policy specifically when analyzing supreme court decisions and the ramifications of decisions on reform. This is another reason why national reform and policy has done so very little to close the achievement gap for minorities since the real power of the education system lies within the states individually.⁴⁰

After the close of WWII, the nation turned its attention back to growing domestic issues such as the developing civil rights movement and the public schooling system. In 1954, the supreme court case of *Brown v. Board of Education* overturned the previous decision of *Plessy v. Ferguson* from 1896 about segregation.⁴¹ The landmark case agreed with *Brown* that the doctrine of “separate but equal” had no place in public education since the segregated schools were inherently unequal. The ruling challenged state and local governing agencies to integrate students of color into all-white educational institutions. Although this created mass consequences socially and culturally for all community members on both sides of the issue, it more importantly set a precedent for using the 14th Amendment of equal protection under the law for education reform for decades to come.

³⁹ Kober, *History and Evolution of Public Education in the US*, 6.

⁴⁰ Kober, *History and Evolution of Public Education in the US*, 6-7.

⁴¹ *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 347, U.S. 483, (1953) accessed November 13, 2022, <https://www.loc.gov/item/usrep347483/>.

Fast forward to 1965 and President Lyndon B. Johnson unveils his ideals of “The Great Society,” including the Immigration and Nationality Act that ended decades of isolationism and opened up the US to immigrants from around the world.⁴² This will have an impact on public education as well as challenges to our local public schools as teachers teach a more diverse population. During this time the civil rights movement had reached violent proportions, there was a mass migration exodus of the urban middle and upper classes to the pristine suburbs, and the minority populations were inclined to poverty and lower economic status. The Great Society consisted of urban revitalization as well as welfare programs and a closer look at our education system. Title I was part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and aimed to federally fund students in poverty.⁴³ This was seen as a huge success for LBJ since previous attempts to give federal aid to economically disadvantaged students had been shot down on the basis of race and religion. Title I passed mostly because of the passing of the Civil Rights Act the previous year, which took the discussion of race out of the hot topic debates. With Title I, all students who attend the school are able to benefit from the federal money given to the LEA (Local Education Agency) based on student attendance.⁴⁴ This was the first federal policy reform that allocated federal funds to public education but there was soon conflict over how and where to spend those funds.

In 1974 the federal government took the step towards full inclusion of Special Education services within public schools with the Education of the Handicapped Act (EHA).⁴⁵ This idea of total inclusion for those with learning differences continued with the 1990 Individuals with

⁴² Abramson, et al., “The Sixties,” Section IV.

⁴³ US Department of Education. *Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies, Title I, Part A*, CFDA Number: 84.010, 1965.

⁴⁴ Andrea Boyle and Katelyn Lee, *Title I at 50: A Retrospective*, AIR, Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research, (October 2015): <https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/Title-I-at-50-rev.pdf>.

⁴⁵ The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, PUBLIC LAW 94-142—NOV. 29, 1975., <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-89/pdf/STATUTE-89-Pg773.pdf>. 733-758.

Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). These changes emphasized that schools are required to provide students with disabilities the same quality of education already provided to those students without disabilities including the expectations of incorporating state learning standards in all subjects. This is problematic, as we will discuss later in the section dedicated to special education and how these minority students are being left behind because of this and other state legislation.

By 2003 President George W. Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which stated that every school child would be rigorously tested by standardized tests aligned to federal and state standards for excellence. With the test data we would be able to determine the success of our students and schools while assessing the school districts and teachers themselves. In 2015, president Barack Obama reestablished this commitment with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the Race to the Top (RttT) initiative of 2013.⁴⁶ Both of these new policies were similar in nature to NCLB, but came with its own set of changes. For example, the RttT initiative was a competitive grant system that allotted additional funding for excellent schools that showed improvements in test scores but also innovation.⁴⁷ It was supposed to invigorate collaboration between teachers and districts to revitalize the school system for the modern era, but instead was seen as a cut throat competition that actually decreased collaboration between states and districts as schools scrambled to earn the grant funds. From all these federal policy and reform changes we can connect a common thread of allocating more and more money to public education while not seeing much change in our student achievement scores.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Daniel Tanner, "Race to the Top and Leave the Children Behind," *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 45:1, 4-15, (2013): 1.

⁴⁷ Sonya Horsford Douglass, "A Race to the Top from the Bottom of the Well? The Paradox of Race and U.S. Education Reform," 138-143.

⁴⁸ Marguerite Roza, *Educational Economics*, 24.

Book banning in local school districts is an ongoing hot topic of local policy right now in 2022, but there have always been waves of book banning in the decades past. Even though this isn't a federal reform policy and is happening at the district and state level, it is too important not to mention here. Common reasons for banning books in the 1980s and '90s were for violence, abuse, sex, or profane language content. Today we are seeing the banning of books from minority authors such as people of color and members of the LGBTQ+ community.⁴⁹ Removing this representation of all peoples from school libraries sends a message to students that they and their identities are unwelcome at school. States like Florida have made national political rhetoric turn from the need to support schools and school reform to demonizing schools and teachers for "indoctrinating" today's students. Research shows that students who feel unwelcomed and underrepresented in their schools have higher rates of truancy and decreased graduation rates.⁵⁰ School districts who are banning books are systematically, through district policy, creating an unnecessary hurdle for our underserved communities within public education. Steven King once wrote about the banning of books in public schools back in 1992 after several of his books were banned in middle and high schools. His warning about censorship is still relevant for today's mass banning of books.

"First, to the kids: There are people in your home town who have taken certain books off the shelves of your school library. Do not argue with them; do not protest; do not organize or attend rallies to have the books put back on their shelves. Don't waste your time or your energy. Instead, hustle down to your public library, where these frightened people's reach must fall short in a democracy, or to your local bookstore, and get a copy of what has been banned. Read it

⁴⁹ Nikki Ross and Alia Wong, "PEN America Report Shows Florida Has 2nd Highest Number of School-related Book Bans," *Fort Myers News-Press*, September 26, 2022, <https://www.news-press.com/story/news/education/2022/09/26/school-book-bans-florida-2nd-highest-nation-pen-america-report-banned/10428021002/>.

⁵⁰ Ross and Wong, "PEN America Report Shows Florida Has 2nd Highest Number of School-related Book Bans."

carefully and discover what it is your elders don't want you to know. In many cases you'll finish the banned book in question wondering what all the fuss was about. In others, however, you will find vital information about the human condition. It doesn't hurt to remember that John Steinbeck, J.D. Salinger, and even Mark Twain have been banned in this country's public schools over the last 20 years.

Second, to the parents in these towns: There are people out there who are deciding what your kids can read, and they don't care what you think because they are positive their ideas of what's proper and what's no are better, clearer than your own. Do you believe they are? Think carefully before you decide to accord the book-banners this right of cancellation, and remember that they don't believe in democracy but rather in a kind of intellectual autocracy. If they are left to their own devices, a great deal of good literature may soon disappear from the shelves of school libraries simply because good books –books that make us think and feel - always generate controversy.”⁵¹

Study of Race and Class and the American Caste System

In 2012 the PISA reported a 15% variation in student performance based on socioeconomic background. “...disadvantaged students show less engagement, drive, motivation and self-beliefs,” the 2012 report stated about this discrepancy in testing outcomes.⁵² Education is the only gateway to rising above one’s station and climbing the economic ladder of life. When we have such discrepancies in education for our disadvantaged students we are systematically keeping these minorities from rising in economic station. If we are to understand why this is

⁵¹ Steven King, “The Book-Banners: Adventure in Censorship is Stranger Than Fiction,” *The Bangor Daily News*, March 20, 1992, <https://stephenking.com/works/essay/book-banners-adventure-in-censorship-is-stranger-than-fiction.html>.

⁵² PISA, *Programme For International Student Assessment PISA Results* (PISA 2012), <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/keyfindings/pisa-2012-results-overview.pdf>, 3-44.

happening in one of the richest countries in the world in the 21st century we need to understand the historical contexts between socioeconomics and ethnicity in America. Most Americans would deny having a caste system in the democratic republic that is the United States, but it seems that policy and systemic racism would prove those assumptions as incorrect. From slavery to Jim Crow laws of the south, repression against minorities of color, including African American, Hispanic, and Native American, have been systematically kept in some of the lowest rungs of society.⁵³ Whether this is purposeful by those in government leadership or not, the fact remains that America has a well-defined caste system for those minorities who continue to live in it.

After the civil rights movement and the decline of urban industrialization, America saw a mass migration of the middle class and wealthy, predominantly white, population moving to the suburbs and fleeing the increasingly dangerous urban life. This is often referred to as the “white flight.”⁵⁴ The aforementioned migration left behind the lower-class minorities of color to struggle in a decaying urban setting with high unemployment, high drug, and high crime rates. This re-segregated the suburban and urban populations by class and ethnicity. By 1967, urban riots from the ethnic minority urban populations showcased the discord facing minorities and their limited access to equality in economic, social and educational opportunities.⁵⁵ Unfortunately not much has changed for our underserved populations since these times and the educational opportunities continue to be limited specifically in urban communities.

⁵³ U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, by James S. Coleman (Washington D.C.: Office of Education. 1966), 330.

⁵⁴ Samuel Abramson, “The Sixties”, *The American Yawp*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018) Chapter 27, Section IV, <https://www.americanyawp.com/text/27-the-sixties/>.

⁵⁵ Abramson, “The Sixties,” Section IV.

Racism in education against the Hispanic community has been less systemic and much more obvious and closely allied with anti-immigration legislation.⁵⁶ This tends to be ironic since the largest Hispanic populations are settled in land areas that used to belong to Mexico or Spain, making these generational Hispanics in America less foreign than some might assume. However, when it comes specifically to education, we can point out that the immigrants who are ELL students are put at a disadvantage for several reasons. First, we must understand that minorities across the country are looking for motivation and role models represented in their education. For example, in Arizona the Tuscan School District, which is predominantly Hispanic, implemented several middle school and high school courses pertaining to Hispanic culture, identity, and history. These inclusive classes raised student morale, attendance, and ultimately graduation rates. Unfortunately, these classes were banned by the state of Arizona and deemed “Non-American.”⁵⁷ Much of our state policy about equality among races is actually to undermine and continue to repress minority populations all in the name of “color-blind” policy.⁵⁸ We continue to see the banning of CRT (Critical Race Theory) from curriculum and teaching lesson plans because of this exact issue. The politicians voting for this ban of CRT fail to understand that ethnicity in America should be recognized and respected, not white washed and ignored. The banning of CRT is literally rewriting American History in our schools and the best teachers in their fields are quitting or being fired over this issue. Ultimately, the district of Tuscan had to remove the hispanic emphasized classes or risk losing their state funding.⁵⁹

Redlining, systemic property discrimination, and cultural ignorance have led America to a systematic caste system that only those minorities affected by it would recognize. We will

⁵⁶ School: The Story of American Public Education: “*A Struggle for Educational Equality: 1950–1980*,” (2000 Films On Demand), accessed November 12, 2022.

⁵⁷ Gillborn, “Racism as Policy,” 7.

⁵⁸ Gillborn, “Racism as Policy,” 12.

⁵⁹ Gillborn, “Racism as Policy,” 7-8.

continue to see how policy is misused and results in keeping the socioeconomically disadvantaged and minorities of color in their place. For example, the supreme court case of San Antonio ISD v Rodriguez.⁶⁰ In this case Rodriguez petitioned the courts to reallocate funds to the poorer schools in the district because the property taxes that fund the schools were considered unfair and not equal for all students within the district. The supreme court ruled in favor of the ISD saying that education was not fundamentally mentioned as a right in the constitution so therefore equality in education, even under the 14th amendment, was not a constitutional right. This ruling would explain why federal policy has done very little to close the achievement gaps of our minority populations and socioeconomic classes.

Clever ways that some policy is conceived as racist is by covering up the fact that race is involved at all and specifically talking only about class systems.⁶¹ By dismissing race it negates any conversations about systemic racism and white privilege. Even when talking only about socioeconomic disadvantages in schools across the US, we can find examples of state policy that have reinforced upper class privilege. One such policy was brought to the state Education committee in Washington State to help reallocate state funds to schools with higher poverty rates.⁶² The education committee carefully constructed a formula that would allocate a percentage more funds to Title I schools and those schools with higher poverty rates among students. When the new state bill hit the house floor it was much contested by the representative from Bellevue (which just so happens to be the city where Bill Gates lives and one of the richest school districts in the state of Washington). It was proposed that if equality was wanting to be achieved then the formula would need to be reworked in benefiting all Washington schools and

⁶⁰ "San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez." Oyez. Accessed November 11, 2022, <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1972/71-1332>.

⁶¹ Gillborn, "Racism as Policy," 12.

⁶² Roza, *Educational Economics*, 37-38.

students. When all was said and done the bill passed into law and Bellevue actually came out receiving more funds per student than the Title I schools even though they have the lowest population of impoverished students. (Figure 1)⁶³ The policy was sold to the public as progressive educational state reform to bring equality to socioeconomically disadvantaged students when in fact it allotted more funds to some of the highest class schools in the state. White superiority and classism won again under the disguise of equality for all students and the policy had the exact opposite effect from what its original purpose had been.

If anyone is still unconvinced that our public education system has major disadvantages to those minorities of ethnicity or class we can also look at the PISA reports. (Figure 2)⁶⁴ In this global analysis through the testing of fifteen year old students, the reports year after year come back with the same results that America is basic to average in math, reading, and science while having a high socioeconomic disparity in our education to all students.⁶⁵ This means that the results are clear that the education system in the US is not equal for minorities of color or class. Not only that, the report goes on to say that the discrepancy is about the equivalent of two years worth of schooling.⁶⁶ Unfortunately, the world-wide educational community can see what most Americans refuse to see, which is that our system is failing our minorities and further perpetuates our systematic caste system.

A Special Conversation about Special Education

⁶³ Roza, *Educational Economics*, 38.

⁶⁴ Andreas Schleicher, "Use Data to Build Better Schools," (video of TEDGlobal, February 21, 2012), https://www.ted.com/talks/andreas_schleicher_use_data_to_build_better_schools?hasSummary=true&language=en, 4:23.

⁶⁵ PISA, *Programme For International Student Assessment PISA Results* (PISA 2012), <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/keyfindings/pisa-2012-results-overview.pdf>, 3-44.

⁶⁶ PISA, *Programme For International Student Assessment PISA Results* (PISA 2012), <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/keyfindings/pisa-2012-results-overview.pdf>, 4.

Special education students are another sector of diverse minorities that have been integrated into public school classrooms over the past century. Historically, exceptional children were denied a formal education and would be routinely institutionalized.⁶⁷ Integration from institutions to regular education classrooms was a slow process that included education reform such as EHA and IDEA. Once exceptional children stopped being institutionalized, the main goals of public education were to give these students moral development for integration into society.⁶⁸ But with the passage of NCLB in the 1990's, schools were now required to expose special education students to grade-level standards and grade-level standardized testing. There are some exceptions to this such as in Oklahoma, the state allows some special education students who are more severely affected by their disabilities to enroll in the Oklahoma Alternative Assessment Program (OAAP) which exempts the students from grade-level state testing.⁶⁹ OAAP testing is specifically reserved for profoundly or severely disabled students, but there is a growing trend in public education to also use it for mild and moderately disabled students also. Not to mention there is an overall increase of children entering into special education services.⁷⁰ Why is this happening? Some would say there is more awareness and therefore more diagnosis of disabilities in children than there were thirty years ago or the wider array of categories we now have for special education services like “emotional disturbance.”⁷¹ But, what is more important to look at is the demographics of the students who are receiving this label during their educational journeys and the unintended consequences of this label. Figures 3⁷²

⁶⁷ Winzer, *The History of Special Education*, 92-93.

⁶⁸ Winzer, *The History of Special Education*, 226.

⁶⁹ Oklahoma Department of Education, “Assessments” accessed: November 17, 2022, <https://sde.ok.gov/assessment>.

⁷⁰ The United States Census Bureau, *Disability Rates Highest Among American Indian and Alaska Native Children and Children Living in Poverty*, by Natalie A. E. Young, (Washington, DC: March 25, 2021).

⁷¹ Winzer, *The History of Special Education*, 339.

⁷² The United States Census Bureau, *Disability Rates Highest Among American Indian and Alaska Native Children and Children Living in Poverty*, by Natalie A. E. Young, (Washington, DC: March 25, 2021).

through 5⁷³ from the US Census Bureau and the Century Foundation, give us a very clear picture that identities of ethnicity and poverty are clear indicators for higher percentages of students who are put into special education. Minorities and low-income students are labeled more for disabilities which has several consequences for the student and the education system. First, in order for the student to receive special education services they must go through the Response To Intervention (RTI) process. This means the student scored low on a reading or math standardized test and was flagged for low proficiency in that subject. After going through a tiered intervention system the student would be evaluated by the school or district psychologist. At that point, the student will or will not qualify for special education and either an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or 504 plan.

This process seems harmless enough until you look at the data. Once a student is labeled as special education, student confidence tends to hinder their schoolwork and experience even further. Because remediation might be needed for a specific content area, sometimes our special education programs are being used for low-income students that just haven't had the educational opportunity their peers have had.⁷⁴ Poverty is one of the strongest factors to student success and achievement performance.⁷⁵ Also there is the disability category Emotional Disturbance/Disability (ED) which we can see from Figure 5, has the largest disparity between low-income students and high-income students. Is it fair that we are seeing disgruntled, low-income students who are worried about where they will get their next meal, and yet we are categorizing them as ED if they don't test proficient in a subject? Although this is much debated

⁷³ Laura A. Schifter, "Students from Low-Income Families and Special Education," *The Century Foundation*, (January 17, 2019), <https://tcf.org/content/report/students-low-income-families-special-education/>.

⁷⁴ Schifter, "Students from Low-Income Families and Special Education."

⁷⁵ Roza, *Educational Economics*, 20.

in the special education community the data is telling us that something to this effect is happening in our schools.

Another consequence for the public school system and the rise of disability labeling is the national shortage of qualified special education teachers. As of 2019 the US is servicing about three million students in the public special education system.⁷⁶ With a shortage of qualified special education teachers, there are tough decisions to make about each individual's school special education program and usually not in the student's best interests. Some students who would benefit from being in a resource room for the day, are actually in the general education classroom with an unqualified general education teacher due to lack of staff. Students are getting discouraged, angry, and are only falling further behind. This crisis in special education can only be solved with more human capital in the form of special education teachers.

A statewide consequence of additional students is funding for services and accommodations for special education students. Not all schools can allot money for their own reading specialists or RTI team. These schools place the burden on general education teachers which is an impossible task to ask of them. An example of one such school and the lack of providing adequate services is the supreme court case of *Hendrick Hudson Central ISD v. Rowley*.⁷⁷ This case was about Rowley, a deaf student, who asked for an ASL interpreter, but the school deemed that she could lip read good enough to get an equal education to her peers. The supreme court sided with the school district saying her education was indeed adequate enough and that "school administrations are allowed to determine what is required to meet a handicapped student's individual needs."⁷⁸ As a parent of a special needs child this is a scary notion that the

⁷⁶ The United States Census Bureau, *Disability Rates Highest Among American Indian and Alaska Native Children and Children Living in Poverty*, by Natalie A. E. Young, (Washington, DC: March 25, 2021).

⁷⁷ "Board of Ed. of Hendrick Hudson Central School Dist., Westchester Cty. v. Rowley," Oyez, accessed November 11, 2022, <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1981/80-1002>.

⁷⁸ "Board of Ed. of Hendrick Hudson Central School Dist., Westchester Cty. v. Rowley."

highest court in our land stated that the administration and not the parents could deem what is educationally appropriate for special needs children.

English Language Learners are also another high population of minorities that are sometimes funneled into special education unnecessarily. For example, if a school only offers a standardized benchmark test in English but the student lacks English proficiency, they will be put on the RTI track towards special education. A lack of cultural awareness or instruction to teachers and admins could also put a student at risk of being labeled special education. For example in many Latin and African countries it is a cultural disrespect for a child to look an adult directly in the eyes, whereas here in America eye contact avoidance is a cue to the teacher that the student may have autism. After the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, and America had an increase in immigration from non-European peoples, our cultural training for educators should have increased to better understand world cultures and some differences we would encounter in the classroom.⁷⁹ Unfortunately that isn't something most teachers have had training on or is not even something teachers are aware of when working with ELL students.

The issues of special education when it comes to minorities, low-income students, and funding are not easy to debate nor fix. The Century Foundation suggests that much more data and research needs to be done for better understanding and policy nationwide.⁸⁰ Some would say that our drive of standardized testing is bringing more students through the RTI process before they really should be labeled as disabled. (I also feel it is vital to mention that while it is contested there are many who believe standardized tests in general are systematically racist.)⁸¹ When talking about standards let us use the example of the 1980's where Kindergarten was

⁷⁹ Abramson, "The Sixties." Section IV.

⁸⁰ Schifter, "Students from Low-Income Families and Special Education."

⁸¹ John Rosales, "The Racist Beginnings of Standardized Testing," *NEA Today*, March 20, 2021, <https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/racist-beginnings-standardized-testing>.

usually the first time most students were entering into a class atmosphere. The goals for that year were learning the alphabet and phonic sounds along with numbers from one to twenty. Students would also enjoy music, gym, and art and usually complete their schooling in a half-day timeframe. Today our school system is funneling students who have already been to full day preschool programs and daycare before that kindergarten year. Our kindergarten standards for these little minds have increased threefold since the 1980s and some would say they are simply no longer developmentally appropriate.⁸² If we look at Finland, with one of the best education systems in the world, most students don't start learning to read until between the ages of seven and ten years of age. Today in the U.S., we are expecting our students to read by ages five and six. Students who can't read by seven years of age are usually put on RTI track for special education services.

For the students who are in special education, life seems overwhelming. Thanks to NCLB all students must be exposed to grade level standards even if that student is a 7th grader who reads at a 3rd grade reading level. The students do double the work to try and fill their achievement gap in testable subjects like math and reading while other courses like science and social studies go by the wayside. The main point is to get the student's scores higher to show growth in those testable subjects. What the student doesn't get to do is enjoy enrichment classes such as STEM or classes that would only be offered to gifted students. I am of the opinion that this way of education is unfair, and ignores the strengths of special education students. There is no time left in the school day to see the student holistically and how they might thrive at something to build confidence and a path for societal success other than reading comprehension

⁸² Oklahoma Department of Education, *Oklahoma Academic Standards: Kindergarten Standards*, (State of Oklahoma, 2022), <https://sde.ok.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/OAS%20Kindergarten%20.pdf>.

and mathematics. Instead they are tested more, given more work, more programs to intervene, and yet we are still failing them.

New Data to Reinforce Old Ideas

Americans love their data and the public school system has perfected the gathering of data across subjects, demographics, etc. Unfortunately what we *do* or neglect to do with this data is another topic for another day. For now, the focus on data is how new data reinforces our skewed perceptions of minorities and lower-class populations.⁸³ When educators, administrators, and policymakers see data that shows a discrepancy between minorities and socioeconomic classes it suggests the old preconceptions about race are scientifically correct. We might have deep seated prejudices telling us that African American students are less intelligent or adverse to working hard.⁸⁴ When this type of subconscious prejudice occurs, it creates a cascade event where expectations for these students are lowered. Lowered standards take a mental and emotional toll on students who can tell if the bar is raised or lowered by their teachers. Low expectations produce lower achievement results. Instead of using the data collected to fix a broken system, we use the data to promote white superiority and reaffirm racist prejudices against minorities. What we should be doing with data is using it to actually improve our system. John Merrlow, when asked about testing in an interview, stated there needs to be a dynamic shift in what we do with testing data. Looking at the issue like an economy; right now teachers are the workers and the product is the students, when in reality the students should be the workers and

⁸³ Douglass, "A Race to the Top from the Bottom of the Well," 137-140.

⁸⁴ Douglass, "A Race to the Top from the Bottom of the Well," 140-143.

the product is knowledge.⁸⁵ There has to be a switch mentally and systematically for this to be achieved using data.

The Funding of American Schools

As the PISA shows us, more money given to education does not translate to excellent results.⁸⁶ The United States spends over \$500 billion dollars a year or roughly \$9,000 per pupil on public education, and the majority of politicians and the general public would not be upset by that if our schools were actually succeeding.⁸⁷ Unfortunately a report was released in 2012 that called our education system a “Threat to National Security.”⁸⁸ Right now, money is allotted to schools by the state at 50%, the local district at 44%, and less than 10% from the federal government.⁸⁹ Why does all of this matter? Roza’s book, *Educational Economics: Where do school funds go*, explains in detail why the economics of schools directly affect student achievement and equality of education to *all* students.⁹⁰

As we have already talked about, the right to education is not a constitutional right which is why our education system is set up to be funded by state and district funds. This creates a disparity between states and between districts within a state which is systemically racist and proven to harm ethnic minority groups and those in lower-income classes. Instead, districts and states do have the opportunity to create equality among all students, but it isn’t happening. One

⁸⁵ Jeffrey Brown, “Why Education Reform Keeps Failing Students,” (video of PBS NewsHour, October 17, 2017), accessed March 22, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lOfioQR6WTI>, 3:40.

⁸⁶ Andreas Schleicher, “Use Data to Build Better Schools,” (video of TEDGlobal, February 21, 2012), https://www.ted.com/talks/andreas_schleicher_use_data_to_build_better_schools?hasSummary=true&language=en, 5:33.

⁸⁷ Roza, *Educational Economics*, 15.

⁸⁸ Joel Klein and Condoleezza Rice, *U.S. Education Reform and National Security: Independent Task Force Report No. 68*, (Council of Foreign Relations Inc. 2012), xiii.

⁸⁹ Roza, *Educational Economics*, 16.

⁹⁰ Roza, *Educational Economics*, 15.

reason is earmarking on funds that restrict how districts and schools use the funds.⁹¹ The highest spending factor is for human capital; administrators, teachers, and school support staff.⁹²

Teachers salaries have been a hot topic of debate for the past several decades and many want to see the system changed. Currently, salary raises are based on longevity with no incentives for excellent teacher performance, and the statistics show that there is no relationship between teacher longevity and enhanced student achievement.⁹³ Another factor of teacher salaries is veteran teachers usually move into higher performing schools in the wealthier districts creating a larger money flow to those schools automatically for salary compensation. In contrast, lower performing schools are usually staffed with rookie teachers who are paid less than their veteran counterparts creating a difference of 20K per teacher salary between high and low performing schools.⁹⁴

When districts run their annual financial report they don't make a distinction between the schools in the district.⁹⁵ This makes it easy for districts to have spending inequalities between schools in their own district without the state actually seeing these inequalities in their financial reports. Other factors such as AP courses that cost much more (\$1,400/student) compared to remedial classes (\$712/students) also contribute to this disparity between low performing schools and high performing schools.⁹⁶ So how can we make the use of funding more equitable for all schools? First, a school district would need to record financial allocation per student per school and not for the entire district. Second, the school board which makes most financial decisions along with the central office needs to understand the financial reports and where money is actually going within these schools and the district. Third, there needs to be a change in teacher

⁹¹ Roza, *Educational Economics*, 20-23.

⁹² Klein and Rice, *U.S. Education Reform and National Security*, 33.

⁹³ Roza, *Educational Economics*, 41.

⁹⁴ Roza, *Educational Economics*, 8.

⁹⁵ Roza, *Educational Economics*, 20.

⁹⁶ Roza, *Educational Economics*, 12.

salaries for rewarding truly excellent teachers instead of raises being based solely on longevity. Last, the organization of the district should be looked at when it comes to central office and administration positions that cost the district much more money than teachers, but have no accountability to the performance of students.

There are many more problems with school funding such as states spending millions on standardized tests and licenses, yet the teachers have to purchase their own school supplies for their classrooms. Or the example of a wealthy school getting a new pool at the same time the remedial school in the same district still has a leaky ceiling. Intradistrict inequality is shocking to read about but has widely been accepted as the norm; ask anyone who has moved houses or used a relatives home address to determine the school their children go to for better educational opportunity. Roza's book about school finance offered the advice of reversing our financial model in order to gain a clearer picture of the reality of school fund allocations. Right now, policymakers look at budgets from the top-down starting with federal funds and trickling down to the local school allocations. Roza explains that instead we should be looking at the individual student's allotment, then move up to the school, finally arriving at the district level to truly provide equitable access to funds and resources.⁹⁷ Again, a flip of mentality when it comes to the economics of our schools must happen in order for a change in the fundamental system to occur outside of policy and national reform. But change is difficult when this is how it has always been done in our education system and the local education agency.

Teachers: The Problem and Solution

⁹⁷ Roza, *Educational Economics*, 90-99.

Teachers... the hero of our education system, or are they? Teachers are currently leaving the profession at an increasingly alarming rate because of burnout from “the system.”⁹⁸ Salaries remain low for teachers compared to other comparable jobs in stress level, education needed, and importance to national economy, creating a poor perception of this career field.⁹⁹ 46% of teachers quit before year five.¹⁰⁰ Less interest in the field of education has left universities to cut spending on Ed programs leading to poor training of our next generation of teachers.¹⁰¹ This includes but isn’t limited to the lack of cultural sensitivity training, differentiating between students of high and low income classes, and awareness of trauma resulting from poverty. Due to the teacher shortage, states have removed hurdles to bring in new teachers through emergency certification routes, some of which are only a few hours of an online class before you can apply to teach in the classroom or teach with no certifications needed at all. New teachers are creating a more problematic scenario for our underserved students.

We can not possibly put all the blame on new, under prepared teachers; because it is also our veteran tenured teachers that are a huge problem in the system. Tenure teachers rarely get fired even if they are found to be unfit to be teachers.¹⁰² In New York, the state pays out around 100 million each year for tenured teachers who are awaiting hearings for classroom offenses. During the waiting period, they are not teaching classes nor working, but they pull a full salary with benefits.¹⁰³ Tenured teachers who aren’t awaiting hearing are shown to engage less with students in the classroom, bring less engaging lessons, and have overall poor student outcomes

⁹⁸ *American Teacher*, directed by Vanessa Roth and Brian McGinn, (2011; The Teacher Salary Project. May 3, 2011), accessed November 20, 2022, 43:40.

⁹⁹ Klein and Rice, *U.S. Education Reform and National Security*, 33.

¹⁰⁰ *American Teacher*, directed by Vanessa Roth and Brian McGinn, (2011; The Teacher Salary Project. May 3, 2011), accessed November 20, 2022, 47:40.

¹⁰¹ John Merrow, *Addicted to Reform: A 12-Step Program to Rescue Public Education* (New York: New Street Press, 2017), 187.

¹⁰² *Waiting for Superman*, directed by Davis Guggenheim, 45:00.

¹⁰³ *Waiting for Superman*, directed by Davis Guggenheim, 45:00-47:00.

compared to non tenured teachers.¹⁰⁴ As we already know, teacher excellence is directly correlated to positive student achievement for all students, not just minorities.

Teacher unions were historically created in the early 19th century to secure reasonable wages.¹⁰⁵ Unfortunately today, they are a barrier to reforming our education system and holding teachers accountable to their schools and students. These teacher unions don't want any distinctions made between teachers, which is hindering any policy for changing pay structure, tenure, or incentives for excellent teachers.¹⁰⁶ The system that was originally there to support and help teachers is now in the way of reform and progress.

Most teachers go to work everyday and give everything they have to make a difference in a student's life. Unfortunately, here in the United States there is high turnover of teachers and a lack of minority representation. Teachers who excel can get massive raises in salary by moving to administration or district-level positions, therefore leaving the classroom to the more inexperienced and less excellent teachers. In order to change the profession of teaching we as a society need to value our teachers and make teaching a valued profession.¹⁰⁷ To understand how the profession of teaching could be seen as a lucrative and highly respected profession we need to look at other countries such as Finland. In Finland, college education programs are competitive and hard to get into leading to selective recruiting. Teachers are paid for their training plus their salaries are about 2.5 times the purchasing power of the US teacher, which equates to that of a medical doctor or lawyer.¹⁰⁸ Teachers in Finland have a highly professionalized working environment in the schools where they teach and they are respected by

¹⁰⁴ *Waiting for Superman*, directed by Davis Guggenheim, 42:16.

¹⁰⁵ *Waiting for Superman*, directed by Davis Guggenheim, 37:03.

¹⁰⁶ *Waiting for Superman*, directed by Davis Guggenheim, 39:00-40:10.

¹⁰⁷ *American Teacher*, directed by Vanessa Roth and Brian McGinn, (2011; The Teacher Salary Project. May 3, 2011), accessed November 20, 2022, 1:05:00.

¹⁰⁸ *American Teacher*, directed by Vanessa Roth and Brian McGinn, (2011; The Teacher Salary Project. May 3, 2011), accessed November 20, 2022, 1:05:40-1:07:00.

parents, students, and the community at large. There is very little turnover, with teachers being life-time career teachers. Although teachers would love to see this type of change happen in the profession of education, it appears that, ironically, some of the roadblocks are that of the teachers themselves in the form of unions.

A Profile of A Successful Student in Today's System

I interviewed a local parent about what makes their student successful in a school setting and how their child has been able to rise above the ranks at the ripe age of eight.¹⁰⁹ In investigating this specific student and her past in education along with her current achievements I was able to compile a profile of what a successful student looks like in America today. This student will be of an Asian or White (non-hispanic) ethnicity and middle to upper class, with a family income of at least 100K or more per year.¹¹⁰ (Figure 6) This student's childhood was a relatively normal childhood ripe with many opportunities for curious exploration and educational enrichments at an early age. This student has no past trauma due to violence, poverty, or domestic issues. No current health concerns or anything that would impair her learning ability or education. This student is from a dual parent household where both parents hold college degrees and one parent is invested in the student's early education. Once the student enters school, she is considered advanced because of her ability to decode words and is showing enriched reading abilities for her age because of the time spent reading at home with her parents. By the second grade, this student is reading on her own and is learning new things everyday just by independently reading new books. At testing time, this student is confident in her abilities and

¹⁰⁹ Diep Nguyen, (Parent of a Gifted and Talented student) Interview, In discussion with the author, November 11, 2022, Not Recorded.

¹¹⁰ Oliver Sicat, *The Real Experts of Education Reform*, (video of TEDxOrangeCoast, October 23, 2014), <https://youtu.be/NqCGzmaMx70?si=Umj47QxelObA2Mjx>.

scores very high in both math and reading. Because of her advanced test scores, she is then singled out and selected for the gifted and talented program at her school. During the gifted program class she is learning to think more analytically and problem solve by means of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) programs. Teachers love working with this student and always comment on how polite and clever they are during classes. Because she is liked by teachers, the teachers tend to spend more time with her in conversation, lesson time, and call on her more in group settings. While other struggling students are spending more time on test prep for the next standardized test, our student can be found working on her science fair project in which she will win second place in the district. This student will have a lifetime love for learning and a confidence to try new things which will carry her through high school and into college. After college she will be set to make even more money than her parents before her and much more than the students who were classified as special education all those years ago in 2nd grade.

Conclusion

Short of saying that the federal reform and past policy is like slapping a Band-Aid on a broken arm, the research clearly shows that the policy hasn't closed achievement gaps in our underserved populations and isn't fixing the public education system at large. Although national policy does continue to keep education reform in the political agenda and social conversations, it would take a foundational overhaul of the role of the federal government in education and the profession of teaching, to make substantial change in equality for students. Education should be written specifically into our constitution and the funds should be allocated carefully and with utter transparency. Some experts and researchers advocate, present at TED conferences, and

write books on ways to fix this floundering system; yet they get pushed back by bureaucratic red tape.¹¹¹ Until the leaders in charge decide that education equality is the top priority, there is little hope in America's schools that things will change. Unfortunately, this rhetoric has been circulating for decades now with no improvements that have actually helped to close achievement gaps. While there is no easy solution to all of the problems we face in education equality, we can continue to research and counsel those in charge to do the best with what we have at this point. I would like to leave you with this quote from Andreas Schleicher, "The test of truth in life is not whether we can remember what we learned in school, but whether we are prepared for change."¹¹² Our reform needs to focus on the type of adults and workers we are needing to compete in a global economy and market, but I fear this type of systemic change will not be achievable on the national level, until it is done well at the state level.

¹¹¹ *Waiting for Superman*, directed by Davis Guggenheim, 31:13.

¹¹² Andreas Schleicher, "Use Data to Build Better Schools," (video of TEDGlobal, February 21, 2012), https://www.ted.com/talks/andreas_schleicher_use_data_to_build_better_schools?hasSummary=true&language=en, 2:55.

Chapter 3

“White Flight” and Oklahoma Educational Integration

Introduction

Education policy and reform in the state of Oklahoma and ethnic minority communities have a complex and rich history due to Oklahoma’s specific geographical location. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 forcibly removed Indigenous communities from the Eastern United States and granted them land east of the Mississippi River in modern-day Kansas and Oklahoma.¹¹³ Thus, before Oklahoma was a state, it was considered Indian Territory with more than thirty distinct tribal nations relocating to the territory through the late 19th century. After the Civil War in 1865, the Oklahoma territory became a promised land for formerly enslaved African Americans with land runs and free land available. Between 1860 and 1920, the creation of more than fifty all-Black towns and settlements sprung up, with the settlers hoping for security and a new life of freedom.¹¹⁴ From the U.S. Census we can see this migration of African Americans into Oklahoma. In 1890, 21,609 African Americans were living in Oklahoma compared to in 1907 when the Black population rose to 112,160.¹¹⁵ That is an increase of over ninety thousand in just seventeen years.

These new communities in Oklahoma promoted “ideologies of economic advancement, self-help, and racial solidarity,” stated Arthur Tolson, a historian of blacks in Oklahoma.¹¹⁶ In these towns the community members could grow without much fear of racial prejudice and harm. They set up businesses, schools, and churches. Town newspapers would talk about the

¹¹³ Andrew Jackson, Message to Congress "On Indian Removal;" 12/6/1830; Presidential Messages, 1789 - 1875; Records of the U.S. Senate, Record Group 46; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

¹¹⁴ The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture, “All Black Towns”, accessed Jan 15, 2024, <https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry?entryname=ALL-BLACK%20TOWNS>.

¹¹⁵ The U.S. Census Bureau, “data.census.gov.” 1907, Generated by Oscar S. Straus. Accessed on January 15, 2024. https://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1907pop_OK-IndianTerritory.pdf.

¹¹⁶ The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture, “All Black Towns,” accessed Jan 15, 2024.

town's prosperity and growth. William Sulcer, a principal of the Separate Schools of Edmond in 1895, worked to improve training for African American teachers and helped establish what is now known as Langston University.¹¹⁷ Charles Douglas Clem, an accomplished poet and school teacher, wrote a letter to Edmond Sun thanking Edmond residents for donating to the school library (175 books) of Tuftime in 1900.¹¹⁸ (Figure 7) These are just a few examples in which we see integration and cooperation of racial education pre-statehood. Although we still have some surviving towns like Langston and Boley today, many of the all-Black towns were abandoned in the early to mid-twentieth century. (Figure 8) There are several reasons for this abandonment of these communities, which for several decades had been flourishing places of refuge for African Americans in the South.

Racial segregation in booming towns such as Guthrie, the territorial capital city, started before statehood. In 1890, Eva and Janette Wilson, two African American elementary students, had attended the Fourth Ward School in Guthrie. This was an integrated school until the spring of 1891, when Logan County voted to segregate schools and the Wilson children weren't allowed to return to their school. Instead they were directed to an all colored school, fourteen blocks away. The Willson's fought the county's decision through the territorial courts. The territory itself would argue the case of Mr. John Wilson and his daughters against its own school district and the City of Guthrie Public Schools. The territory and Wilson family won their case.¹¹⁹ This case is unique in that the territory and courts found segregation, in this case to be unconstitutional, and speaks to the intricacy of race relations in the Oklahoma Territory at this time.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Edmond History Museum, "Separate Schools," Edmond Sun-Democrat, accessed February 2, 2024, <https://www.edmondhistory.org/separate-schools/>.

¹¹⁸ Edmond History Museum, "Separate School."

¹¹⁹ Marion et al., Board of School Trustees v. Territory ex rel. Wilson, 32 P. 116, 1 Okla. 210 (OK. 1893).

¹²⁰ Sara Doolittle, "Contingencies of Place and Time: The Significance of Wilson v. Marion and Oklahoma Territory in the History of School Segregation." *History Education Quarterly*, (July 13, 2018): Abstract.

Directly after Oklahoma's statehood in 1907, the newly formed Oklahoma Legislature passed several Jim Crow laws. On December 18, 1907, Senate Bill One, was the first law in the state of Oklahoma and it called for "the mandatory segregation between races in trains and train stations."¹²¹ Growing tensions developed when Oklahoma cities, including Edmond, adopted more and more Jim Crow laws including the prevention of hiring "Negro labor" and the refusal to "rent, lease or sell land... to any person of Negro blood, or agents of theirs."¹²² By the 1930s the once thriving all-Black settlements were shrinking, with the exception of twelve towns that passed the test of time and discrimination, and new Sundown Towns were springing up.

From statehood to the 1960s Oklahoma goes through some radical social and educational changes with increasing hostility between different ethnic groups. Through state legislation, district policy, and the migration patterns of White Oklahoma residents; the research shows how ethnic minority communities were harmed educationally. This turbulent time period of civil rights and equality for all races wasn't a unique happening for Oklahoma, since it the movement swept through the U.S. But by taking a closer look at Oklahoma and more specifically, the city Edmond, there might be a way to uncover how education during desegregation influenced the public education system we have today.

Historiography

Although there are many sources and writings done on the civil rights movement during the 1950s and 1960s, there isn't much written about specifically "white flight" in Oklahoma. Much is known and written about Clara Luper, the Oklahoma sit-ins, student protests, and education supreme court cases, but less is written about how the migration of white populations

¹²¹ Oklahoma Senate Bill One, *Senate Journal Vol#1*, Chairman, Mr. Graham. (December 18, 1907), <https://oksenate.gov/sites/default/files/journals/sj1907v1.pdf>, 69.

¹²² The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture, "All Black Towns," accessed Jan 15, 2024.

away from city centers and into the suburbs affected the educational integrity for ethnic minority populations.

Kevin M. Kruse is the author of “White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism.” His research focuses on the migration and political changes surrounding the desegregation of Atlanta, Georgia. While his research and findings are about a different city they were essential to the research on Oklahoma City and Edmond. Seeing what primary sources and documentation he was able to find gave great insight to research methodologies. Kruse argues that the migration of white populations was not only deliberate but was politically and socially motivated due to desegregation in the city of Atlanta. His research goes on to state how these migrations contributed to the downfall of urban centers, but also systematically created inequalities in public education and community services. Thus, continuing discrimination against ethnic minority communities while continuing to contribute to generational poverty and lack of resources for those populations.¹²³

Two other sources that were critical to understanding how desegregation affected education reform and policy was James L. Leloudis’ book “Schooling the New South” and Raymond Wolters’ book “Race and Education 1954-2007.” Neither of these books were specifically talking about the consequences of white flight, but focused more on education and racial disparities and pedagogy. In Leloudis’ book, he takes a closer look at educating newly freed African Americans in North Carolina between 1880 and 1920. This gave great historical insight into education post-Civil War. Wolters’ book on the other hand, takes a deep dive into education policy during the Civil Right Movement and the last effects into the late twentieth

¹²³ Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

century. His book paired with Kruses' research methodologies, helped pave the way for uncovering and understanding educational practices in Oklahoma City and Edmond.¹²⁴

Edmond, Oklahoma: The Development of a Sundown Town

Before Oklahoma statehood in 1907, the Indian Territory was advertised as a place of refuge for the previously enslaved population. That included Edmond Oklahoma, located only twenty miles south from the territorial capital city of Guthrie, fifteen miles north of the future state capital of Oklahoma City, and located in the heart of central Oklahoma.¹²⁵ In the late 19th century Edmond had a small African American population of around fifty people out of Edmond's 1,500 total population.¹²⁶ This small population maintained their own school, church, and grocery store. Caroline Covington, was the first African American to graduate from Edmond Public Schools in 1903, although it wasn't without controversy.¹²⁷ The graduation test was only administered at the "whites only" school. When she showed up to take the test, it resulted in murmurs and comments from the white students. These escalated until test administrators finally moved her out in the hallway, and then off the premises entirely to take the test elsewhere. While Edmond was clearly not ready for full integration of all ethnicities, things would only continue to get worse for these ethnic minority communities after statehood.

The African American population in Edmond dwindled as families started moving out due to growing racial tensions. Some moved to more predominantly black towns in Oklahoma such as Guthrie, or Langston; while others moved out of the state all together. A clear example

¹²⁴ James L. Leloudis, *Schooling the New South: Pedagogy, Self, and Society in North Carolina, 1880-1920*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Raymond Wolters, *Race and Education 1954-2007*, (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 2008).

¹²⁵ Mileage provided by GoogleMaps.com.

¹²⁶ Christopher Lehman, *West Edwards Days: African Americans in Territorial Edmond, 183-191*, accessed Jan. 15, 2024, <https://www.okhistory.org/publications/chroniclesok/COO97-2Lehman.pdf>, 181.

¹²⁷ Lehman, *West Edwards Days: African Americans in Territorial Edmond*, 183.

of the discrimination that could be faced in the knowledge that the KKK was an active organization in Edmond starting in 1922. A local newspaper noted with glee in November 1921 that the city had “no colored population.”¹²⁸ With this declaration, the newest chapter of the KKK started making public appearances in Edmond. The KKK was an operating organization in the area with demonstrations and cross burnings as seen in the 1937 issue of the Oklahoman. (Figure 9) Resettlement of Edmond by any African Americans was discouraged since there was no longer a colored elementary and middle school, and realtors would refuse to show houses in Edmond to any families of color. This is the beginning of Edmond being a sundown town.

Sundown towns are all-white towns and cities that formally or informally kept out African Americans or other minority ethnic groups. Edmond was a sundown town that by city ordinance excluded people of color after dark among other restrictions. From the 1920s to the late 1940s, the chamber of commerce, schools, and residences all proudly promoted the city of Edmond as 100% all white, even though there were no city ordinances on the books restricting African Americans from living there.¹²⁹ The Royce Cafe boasted on a tourist postcard that Edmond had “6,000 Live Citizens, No Negroes.”(Figure 10) In Taylor Candacy’s book, “Overground Railroad, The Green Book and the Roots of Black Travel in America,” she states it was common knowledge that Edmond wasn’t a safe place to be if you were a person of color. It was best to fill up on gas or eat in towns like Luther, Guthrie, or Langston if you were an African American traveling through central Oklahoma.¹³⁰ This was a source of pride for Edmondnites and demographic information can be seen on various archives including a “Newcomers Guide” for newest of Edmond residents. (Figure 11)

¹²⁸ Lehman, *West Edwards Days*, 186.

¹²⁹ Edmond History Museum, “Was Edmond A Sundown Town?,” accessed January 18, 2024, <https://www.edmondhistory.org/was-edmond-a-sundown-town/>.

¹³⁰ Candacy Taylor, *Overground Railroad: The Green Book and the Roots of Black Travel in America* (New York, Abrams Press, 2020), (accessed via Audio Book on Sora), Ch 8.

Desegregation In OKC and White Flight to Edmond

In 1954, The Supreme Court ruled that segregation in education was a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment and, therefore, unconstitutional in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. A year later in 1955, the court instructed the nation to “begin desegregation plans with all deliberate speed.”¹³¹ This wording being vague and carefully crafted, mostly left the ways of desegregation to the states themselves with no clear solution in place. In Oklahoma, higher education such as the University of Oklahoma had already undergone court-ruled desegregation cases such as *Sipuel v. Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma* (1948), where the Court ruled that Ada Lois Sipuel was entitled to a legal education in a state school.¹³² Along with the 1950 case, *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education*, where the Court ruled that the University of Oklahoma violated the Fourteenth Amendment when George McLaurin was segregated on campus because of his race.¹³³

However, K-12 public education was slow to start integration procedures. Some of this was due to conflicting ideas of how to integrate students of different ethnicities successfully across the schools that were in operation at the time. Another roadblock was the city laws and ordinances that had zoned housing by race, systematically and historically segregated schools by community. Because housing and communities were already historically segregated, integrating the schools became quite a challenge.

¹³¹ *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. Opinion; May 17, 1954; Records of the Supreme Court of the United States; Record Group 267; National Archives, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/brown-v-board-of-education>.

¹³² *Sipuel v. Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma*, No. 369. 332 U.S. 631, (OK. 1948).

¹³³ *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education*, No. 34. 339 U.S. 637, (1950).

In 1955, the Oklahoma School board resolved to “discontinuing separate schools for white and Negro children.”¹³⁴ But Judge Bohanon countered that the practices of allowing transfers to white students maintained racial segregation and an ideology of non-integration, “which encouraged students of a racial minority to transfer to a school in which they were a racial majority.”¹³⁵ Bohanon emphasized the importance of integration for the opportunity and educational benefit of all students. The School Board and local residents were concerned that specifically Harding had become a totally black school in a white neighborhood resulting from white flight because of the Pairing Plan of integration.¹³⁶ It was in 1969 that Willis Wheat, as the head of the Oklahoma City School Board Desegregation Committee presented the ‘Wheat Plan.’¹³⁷ As parts of the plan were leaked out to the community it was met with over six hundred community protesters and was immediately struck down. Those in favor of segregation saw their position as a defense of their own liberties rather than the denial of others and this new system as a way to oppress the way of life they have had previously.¹³⁸ This was seen as more than just an integration of schools but an attack on the white community itself, their neighborhoods, and home values. Exercising freedom to choose integration came in the form of school transfer requests, with some stating the reason for transfer as “the right to maintain freedom of association.”¹³⁹

The OKC School Board created a Committee on Equality of Educational Opportunity (CEEEO) which was to devise a plan to replace the Pairing Plan. In this new plan the committee advised the board to stop transfer requests immediately and to enforce attendance policy

¹³⁴ Kenny A. Franks and Paul Lambert, *The Legacy of Dean Julien C. Monnet: Judge Luther Bohanon and The Desegregation of Oklahoma City’s Public Schools*, (Muskogee: Western Heritage Books, 1984), 31.

¹³⁵ Franks and Lambert, *The Legacy of Dean Julien C. Monnet*, 31.

¹³⁶ Franks and Lambert, *The Legacy of Dean Julien C. Monnet*, 40-41.

¹³⁷ Franks and Lambert, *The Legacy of Dean Julien C. Monnet*, 41-42.

¹³⁸ Kruse, *White Flight*, 9.

¹³⁹ Kruse, *White Flight*, 161.

according to legal residence. This plan along with some boundary changes would develop the ideal seventy to thirty, white to black ratio needed for true integration. This plan was specifically looking at the Harding and Northeast schools as examples for success.¹⁴⁰ The School Board held an unannounced secret meeting in order to pass the CEEO's proposals for integrations. Unfortunately, problems continued to arise as migration of black and white citizens changed, continuing to alter the school demographic numbers. Several other plans passed the school board including the Cluster Plan, which closed predominantly black schools and dispersed those students across to predominantly white schools beginning in 1970.¹⁴¹ Judge Bohanon refuted the proposal saying that it was a large step backward in the progress of desegregation.

As civil rights activist Clara Luper puts it in her book *Behold The Walls*:

“It took a life member of the NAACP Youth Council, Robert Dowell, and his father, Dr. A.L. Dowell to integrate the Oklahoma City schools, and it took Judge Luther L. Bohanon, a strong, strict Constitutionalist, to destroy the all-Black and all-white schools in Oklahoma City.”¹⁴²

The Dowell v. The Board of Education of Oklahoma City case was settled in 1972, or eighteen years after The Supreme Court ruled against segregated education and sixteen years after their original suit from 1961. In this case, Dr. Dowell wished for his son to attend Northeast but was zoned for an all-black school.¹⁴³ (Figure 12) Since housing zones were segregated, the only solution the court could find was to bus students to other community schools. In 1971, The Finger Plan had a multifaceted approach to restructuring grade levels within schools changing

¹⁴⁰ Franks and Lambert, *The Legacy of Dean Julien C. Monnet*, 42.

¹⁴¹ Franks and Lambert, *The Legacy of Dean Julien C. Monnet*, 72.

¹⁴² Clara Luper, *Behold The Walls*, Commemorative ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2023), 205.

¹⁴³ Franks and Lambert, *The Legacy of Dean Julien C. Monnet*, 20.

middle schools from 7-8-9th grades to 6-7-8th grades.¹⁴⁴ But also, the court order started the era of “forced bussing” which Clara Luper calls a racists front to the real issues of desegregation.

“Where were those proponents of forced busing when little Black children were being bused from within a few feet of white high schools for several miles to Black schools prior to 1954?”¹⁴⁵

Clara Luper herself was a History teacher who was transferred from the eastern part of OKC in Spencer to Northwest Classen High in the Northwest part of OKC. This transfer made state news since Classen was a white school and she was the first Black teacher to be employed there.¹⁴⁶ The bussing lasted for five years until the court ruled that the district was, in fact, integrated. The resulting resegregation of schools was said to be out of the district's control due to residential zoning and white flight away from the urban community.

Court cases went both ways with Whites and Blacks alike filing suits against the school districts. For example, Raymond and Yvonne York of Oklahoma City sued the city in 1969. The school boundary changes caused their son, Ray York, to attend the predominantly Black, Harding Junior High School instead of the predominantly White Taft.¹⁴⁷ The York family ignored the assignment order and enrolled their fourteen-year-old son in Taft, where he attended classes under “falsified registration.” The teachers were told not to accept school work from Ray and to confiscate his textbooks. The family was fined and Judge Bohanon’s order required Ray to attend Harding without possibility of transferring.¹⁴⁸ The legal team for the York family stated that the denial of Ray to attend Taft, “violated the Yorks’ right to pursuit of happiness as set out in the Declaration of Independence.”

¹⁴⁴ Franks and Lambert, *The Legacy of Dean Julien C. Monnet*, 91.

¹⁴⁵ Luper, *Behold The Walls*, 207.

¹⁴⁶ Luper, *Behold The Walls*, 208.

¹⁴⁷ Board of Education of Independent School District 89, Oklahoma County, Plaintiff-appellee, v. Raymond P. York and Yvonne J. York, Defendants-appellants. 429 F.2d 66, (10th Cir. 1970).

¹⁴⁸ Franks and Lambert, *The Legacy of Dean Julien C. Monnet*, 79-81.

Even with cases being heard from both segregationists and integrationists, schools kept being “racially identifiable” by the majority of the student population. For example, schools like Douglass High School in 2004, fifty years after *Brown v. BOE*, had an enrollment of 498 Black students and 2 white students.¹⁴⁹ While the forced busing brought on by the Finger Plan did help integrate some of the Oklahoma City Public Schools it has lasting effects on both OKC and the neighboring suburb of Edmond.

Edmond

One of the largest consequences of white flight to the city of Edmond was a sharp and fast increase in population and school enrollment. Between the years of 1958 and 1959 the high school enrollment more than doubled.¹⁵⁰ While this sounds like a great accomplishment for the booming city, it didn’t come without its fair share of complications.

In May 1969, an Edmond chapter of the NAACP was organized and consisted of mostly white citizens since Edmond was still 100% white at this time. The newly formed chapter listed suggested projects and goals for the city of Edmond. A few of these goals listed were “The employment of 10 black teachers in Edmond public schools.” and “Integrated employment of the city’s police and fire departments and city hall crews.”¹⁵¹ (Figure 13)

The enrollment boom in Edmond public schools put a strain on classroom space even with the addition of new school buildings.¹⁵² The need for funds led to tuition charging for

¹⁴⁹Judy Gibbs Robinson and Michael Bratcher, “Still Divided In 1954, the Supreme Court Changed the Landscape of American Education with *Brown v. Board of Education*. Fifty Years Later, Oklahoma City Area Schools Continue to Struggle for the Right Balance,” *The Oklahoman*, May 16, 2004, <https://www.oklahoman.com/story/news/2004/05/16/supreme-changed-landscape-american-education-education-oklahoma-schools-continue-struggle-balance/61989458007/>.

¹⁵⁰ Edmond History Museum, “Growth,” *The Edmond Sun*, January 30, 1967, accessed January 19, 2024.

¹⁵¹ Edmond History Museum, “Integrating Edmond,” *The Oklahoman*, May 10, 1969, accessed January 18, 2024, <https://www.edmondhistory.org/integrating-edmond/>.

¹⁵² Oklahoma City Times, “Enrolment Boom Puts Squeeze on Edmond Classroom Space.” *Oklahoma City Times*, (September 13, 1961).

transfers into the school district. In 1968, Edmond charged a tuition of \$600 per transfer student and Putnam City charged \$564.58. Hugh Bingham, the superintendent for Edmond Public Schools at the time stated, “As long as I have room and they pay the tuition, we can take them.”¹⁵³

Other issues such as teacher shortages and land acquisition for new school building sites were most of the educational discussions happening between 1970s and 80s in Edmond. These issues again stem from the need of more financial resources to accommodate the rapid growth of the city and student population. The Edmond Sun reported in 1984 reported on these different endowment programs and city groups that donated to raise funds for the growing district.¹⁵⁴ Business leaders would come together and create financial grant programs for Edmond schools while helping with fundraising for the district. It was a community coming together to oversee the school budget issues and make ends meet. It appeared that the forced busing in OKC was also affecting smaller surrounding districts like Deer Creek. In 1972 Deer Creek School District, just west of Edmond, grew with district enrollment up 40% from the previous year.¹⁵⁵

While the consequences to Edmond revolved mostly around the financial reform that was needed to carry such district growth, Edmond as a city thrived on the migration of white flight. Businesses were prosperous, new homes were being built, and development around the city was doing great things for the citizens who lived there.

Oklahoma City

There are many consequences from desegregation on our students and communities in Oklahoma City. As white migration out of Oklahoma City and into suburban areas persisted,

¹⁵³ The Oklahoman, “Some City Students Transfer: Race Order Skirted.” *The Oklahoman* (August 21, 1968): 40.

¹⁵⁴ James Laughlin, “Edmond Parents Form Group To Aid City Schools.” *The Edmond Sun* (February 1, 1984).

¹⁵⁵ Boyce Bowdon and Jerry Powell, “Busing ‘Flight’ Hikes School Rolls.” *The Oklahoman* (September 3, 1972): 1.

OKCPS enrollment dropped significantly. In 1970 there were over seventy thousand students enrolled compared to in 1979 there were only forty thousand.¹⁵⁶ As school enrollments dropped so did funding for the arts and extracurricular activities such as sports and band. This gradual decline affected students and the opportunities they had during their high school years and beyond.

Another unforeseen consequence was the resegregation of specific schools and racial inequalities in education. The Daily Oklahoman describes it best in their article from November 1961, “Resegregation means simply that formerly all white southern and boarder state schools which were integrated have gradually become all Negro schools as whites have moved out of the “integrated” districts. Some now say there are more Negro segregated schools in the south than there were before 1954.”¹⁵⁷ The process of how this resegregation can take place in a specific school was outlined using Oklahoma City’s Creston Hills Elementary School as a prime example. “Formerly all white, the first Negro pupils entered in September of 1955. By the end of that school year, Negroes outnumbered whites. The following fall, a Negro faculty replaced the white one, and all the white children withdrew.”¹⁵⁸ It goes on to state that this process was reciprocated for the next five years at multiple OKC schools. “The racial and economic divide widened amid a dramatic shift in enrollment patterns. Across U.S. public schools from 1968 to 2011, enrollment among white students dropped twenty-eight percent, but grew by nineteen percent among black students and four hundred and ninety-five percent for Hispanics.”¹⁵⁹ (Figure 14)

¹⁵⁶ Franks and Lambert, *The Legacy of Dean Julien C. Monnet*, 107.

¹⁵⁷ The Daily Oklahoman, “City Included In Shift,” *The Daily Oklahoman* (November 19, 1961).

¹⁵⁸ The Daily Oklahoman, “City Included In Shift.”

¹⁵⁹ Jennifer Palmer and Whitney Bryen. “Then and Now: Brown v. Board’s Legacy in Oklahoma City Schools.” *Oklahoma Watch*, May 17, 2019, accessed January 18, 2024, <https://oklahomawatch.org/2019/05/17/then-and-now-brown-v-boards-legacy-in-oklahoma-city-schools/>.

With dropping enrollment district wide, schools which were predominantly Black, were closed. When these schools closed, people continued to move out of the surrounding neighborhoods, leading to a drop in housing values and economic prosperity. It is argued by some that racial segregation was only replaced and relabeled as economic segregation in our urban areas.¹⁶⁰

The consequences of white flight due to desegregation in OKC led to much more disastrous results that affected more people in a personal way than the consequences in Edmond. This again shows the disparity between the migration to the suburbs and those left in the urban city centers during desegregation.

Conclusion

The process and controversy stemming from the desegregation of public schools in the state of Oklahoma did not come without major hurdles and hiccups along the way. It took the better part of two decades to integrate schools with both students and faculty of different ethnicities. Even then, white flight out of urban schools and into suburban areas would cause the resegregation of urban schools and communities leading to school closures and economic downturn. *The Vista* on July 4, 1963, reported on the facts and figures of school desegregation and the employment opportunities for Black teachers within different districts.¹⁶¹ (Figure 15) In this figure, it is a sign of the time ahead and what is to come for the resegregation of the urban schools.

¹⁶⁰ Robinson and Bratcher, “Still Divided In 1954, the Supreme Court Changed the Landscape of American Education with Brown v. Board of Education.”

¹⁶¹ Edmond History Museum, “White Flight Fuels The Growth of Edmond.” Accessed January 18, 2024, <https://www.edmondhistory.org/white-flight-fuels-the-growth-of-edmond/>.

Throughout this time period we see districts taking the lead on the teacher development needed for new integration. In 1969, *The Oklahoman* reported on a Miss. Gertrude Noar who gave professional development to over 45 teachers on how to “take the leadership in changing desegregation into true integration.”¹⁶² Miss. Noar wrote an equal-schooling handbook that she uses to lecture across the United States. But it wasn’t until the 1970’s that African American families started to move back into Edmond slowly. Richard Turner became the first African American student enrolled in Edmond High School in 1974.¹⁶³ Slowly, integration was coming to the suburbs of Edmond, Oklahoma.

Why is integration so important? “Mrs. Luper says the value of integrated schools - integrated racially as well as economically - is that students can share insight with others who have never had the same experiences. She explains that at Northwest Classen, many of the students have traveled extensively... at Dunjee, she says, pupils had not had the advantage of travel. By the same token, she says, students who have never known what it is like in the poverty areas could benefit from experiences shared by pupils who live in those areas.”¹⁶⁴

Today, some parents have a completely different view of integrated education in Oklahoma than they did in the 1950s. In 2016, an article written by John Thompson states that since Central Oklahoma had such massive sprawl for several decades, parents and students alike are now wanting a more united and diverse student body. He states, “We should learn from history and build schools that sustain our values of neighborliness and fairness for all children. Let’s choose a united future, not the winners-and-losers mentality of the Big Sort.”¹⁶⁵ However, there are some that argue current legislation of school vouchers are just another form of

¹⁶² “Prejudice Blamed On Fear of New,” *The Oklahoman*, June 17, 1969, 9.

¹⁶³ “School Integration,” Edmond History Museum, accessed January 18, 2024, <https://www.edmondhistory.org/school-integration/>.

¹⁶⁴ Luper, *Behold The Walls*, 211.

¹⁶⁵ John Thompson, “How Suburban Sprawl Divides OKCPS From Its Peers,” *NonDoc*, August 13, 2016, accessed January 17, 2024, <https://nondoc.com/2016/08/13/suburban-sprawl-okcps-peers/>.

privileged ‘white flight.’ Just as recently as 2022, Felix Linden, a public school teacher of over 12 years in OKC stated that school vouchers under the guise of ‘school choice’ is just another way for middle class white families to divert public funds to private schools of their choosing.¹⁶⁶ This topic continues to be an ongoing debate among policy makers and educational advocates. Just recently, the state of Oklahoma was one of the first states to publicly fund a private Catholic school. Today both OKC and Edmond are still prime examples of white flight and the consequences of desegregation plans of the 1960s era. Along with understanding the cause and effects of desegregation, one can always hope that education in the State of Oklahoma will become more diverse and equitable for all students, no matter the ethnicity.

¹⁶⁶ Felix Linden, “Opinion: School Vouchers Are Another Version of ‘White Flight,’” *Oklahoma City Free Press*, March 17, 2022, <https://freepressokc.com/opinion-school-vouchers-are-another-version-of-white-flight/>.

Chapter 4

The Privatization of Schooling in Oklahoma: The Consequences to Student Achievement Across Underserved Groups and Socioeconomic Classes

Introduction and a Brief Historiography

Throughout world history, education was a private occurrence for the wealthy and privileged. In the United States, it was not until 1837 when Horace Mann, a Massachusetts Senator and the state's first secretary of education, made the proclamation that education should be universal with the advocacy of state run "common schools."¹⁶⁷ Massachusetts, leading the way in free public education, was also one of the first states with school attendance laws starting in 1852. This law required students ages eight to fourteen to attend school for twelve weeks per year, even though it was hardly enforced with backlash from rural parents.¹⁶⁸ From then, the growth and achievements of our nation's public school system has dominated political elections, state budgets, and questions of equitable education for all. Starting in the 1980s a shifting rhetoric of privatization as the saving hope of education, specifically for underserved student populations, has dominated federal and state policy.¹⁶⁹ While under the guise of "reform" and improvement for our schools, the past forty years have shown that privatization does not improve student achievement outcomes and actually further segregates education for underserved students and those in lower economic classes.

There are many different scholars and researchers investing their expertise in the outcomes and harmful effects of privatization specifically for underserved students and those students in poverty. In *Cutting School: The Segrenomics of American Education*, Noliwe Rooks

¹⁶⁷ David Carlton, "Horace Mann," *The First Amendment Encyclopedia*, 2009.

¹⁶⁸ John J. Loeper, *Going to School in 1876* (New York: McClelland & Steward, Ltd. 1984), 7.

¹⁶⁹ Diane Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath: The Passionate Resistance to Privatization and the Fight to Save America's Public Schools* (New York: Random House, 2020), 131.

argues that the economics behind neoliberal education privatization acts as a continuation of educational segregation in America.¹⁷⁰ Those that agree with Rooks and take a more historical approach to the topic are Diane Ravitch and Valerie Strauss. Both have completed extensive research on the rise of privatization in education plus the federal government policies that made it possible along with harmful outcomes for students, teachers, and the public school system in general. They both have blog sites, continue to publish books, along with published journal articles on the topic of failed privatization and how this type of reform is critically harmful to the ideologies of universal public education. Alfie Kohn, while being outspoken against privatization, is also one of the more controversial figures pertaining to his ideas about human behavior, parenting, and the education of children. He has written fourteen books about his theories and research on child development and human behavior, including internal motivation and how we achieve it. His ideas about classroom management are probably the most controversial among the public with published books such as “Feel Bad Education,” “Punished by Rewards,” and “Beyond Discipline.”¹⁷¹

These scholars and researchers have witnessed firsthand the federal policies from the 1970s to today that have pushed privatization onto state and district public schools. Diane Ravitch, while sending her own children to private schools, was simultaneously researching the student outcomes and failings of privatization across the nation.¹⁷² Others such as John Merrow, an acclaimed journalist who has written about education reform and policy for over fifty years was once a supporter of privatization, but has since changed his views as new data has been

¹⁷⁰ Noliwe Rooks, *Cutting School: The Segrenomics of American Education* (New York: The New Press, 2020), 13.

¹⁷¹ Rooks, *Cutting School*, 13; Alfie Kohn, “Home” Personal Website, accessed: March 12, 2023; Alfie Kohn, *Feel-Bad Education: And Other Contrarian Essays on Children and Schooling* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011); Alfie Kohn, *Punished by Rewards: The Trouble with Gold Stars, Incentive Plans, A’s, Praise, and other Bribes* (New York: Mariner Books, 1999); Alfie Kohn, *Beyond Discipline: From Compliance to Community* (Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development ASCD, 2006).

¹⁷² Diane Ravitch, “About” Personal Blog Website, accessed: March 11, 2023.

made available.¹⁷³ John Merrow was also the journalist that exposed the cheating scandal in Washington, DC charter schools. I have joined other homeschooled families at the Oklahoma State Capital for “School Choice” day and spoken to Senate representatives about how important school choice is for my family. Yet, I was unaware of the devastating effects privatization has had on public school districts, communities, and our minority student populations. While education reform and policy is complex, we now have proof that privatization is not the equitable educational choice nor the innovative solution that was once sold to us four decades ago.¹⁷⁴

Defining Terms

Most of the time when discussing governmental policy in education we use the term “reform.” For our purposes, the word “reform” with its implications of innovation and improvement will not be used when talking about privatization. The movement for privatization had little to do with reform and more to do about economics and capitalism in a free market, with America’s students as the product. While privatization pumped billions of philanthropic dollars into education; by their own measurements of standardized test scores, the great educational experiment of privatization has failed.¹⁷⁵ Some like Jennifer Job, Kristi Dickey, Susan Kirk, Justin McCrackin, and Gina Morris; authors of “Dumbing Down the Fly-Over State: The Scape-Goating of Education in Oklahoma,” would argue that the word reform was used to blind us all into moving away from a welfare state into a market education economy.¹⁷⁶ Therefore, with

¹⁷³ Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath*, 48, 87.

¹⁷⁴ Alfie Kohn, “Home” Personal Website, Accessed: March 12, 2023; Diane Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath: The Passionate Resistance to Privatization and the Fight to Save America’s Public Schools* (New York: Random House, 2020); John Merrow, *Addicted to Reform: A 12-Step Program to Rescue Public Education* (New York: New Street Press, 2017); Noliwe Rooks, *Cutting School: The Segrenomics of American Education* (New York: The New Press, 2020); Valerie Strauss, “The Answer Sheet Blog,” Washington Post, Accessed: March 11, 2023.

¹⁷⁵ Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath*, 5.

¹⁷⁶ Jennifer Job, Kristi Dickey, Susan Kirk, Justin McCrackin, and Gina Morris, “CHAPTER SIXTEEN: Dumbing Down the Fly-Over State: The Scape-Goating of Education in Oklahoma,” *Counterpoints* 494 (2017): 266.

the data on the failings of privatization the word reform will not be used in reference to its policies.

When asked who underserved populations are in America; most people will automatically assume you are referring to ethnic minorities or that demographic of race, with the most common minorities being African Americans and Hispanic students. Since we are specifically discussing the education system we need to broaden our terms of what it means to be a minority. Yes, ethnicity does play a role in the minority discussion and tends to dominate political rhetoric as one of the most discussed topics about achievement gaps and reform for equality. We will also discuss the socioeconomic disadvantaged minorities that sometimes get intertwined with minority races, thus making those conversations more complex and hazy at best. Special education students or those students on an IEP or 504 are also considered underserved populations when discussing education privatization and require different consideration from the local, state, and national agencies. Another group which is included in the term underserved when talking about education reform is our ELL/ESL (English Language Learners/English as a Second Language) who speak a different language than English as their first language. The LGBTQ+ community is another underserved community of students that continues to get pushed to the side, specifically by privatized religious schools. We will be discussing all categories of underserved student populations in more depth.

In order to understand the scope of the privatization movement we must define what is a private school in the context of government policy. Privatization of schools includes but isn't limited to religious private schools, secular private schools, voucher schools, charter schools, virtual schools, and virtual charter schools. Homeschool will also be lumped into our category of privatized education since those homeschool students are unenrolled from their district schools

and new policy, as recent as 2023, is aiming to grant homeschooled students state educational funds. There are voucher scholarship programs available in the state of Oklahoma like the The Lindsey Nicole Henry Scholarships for students on an IEP to attend other schools for special services that may not be available at their district.¹⁷⁷ While these voucher scholarships are part of the privatization of schools we will lump them into the same category of voucher schools. Figure 17 shows how much Oklahoma public education funds have been allocated to just the Lindsey Nicole Henry Scholarship and voucher program since 2010.

Neoliberalism and the Changing of School Management

Neoliberalism “places the market above all other public goods.”¹⁷⁸ In education it is a top down business management approach to school organizations with a very specific agenda to demonize teachers, close poor performing schools, and disrupt communities at large. Diane Ravitch called the proponents of privatization “disruptors” because that is what they aim to do in communities while taking down public education as we know it.¹⁷⁹ Under the guise of innovation in education, the privatization of schools produced results that happen to be the loss of teachers and principals, the closing of rural and inner-city schools, and the breakdown of underserved communities while they struggle to find their place in this shift.

How did this shift occur? President Ronald Reagan in the 1980s was on a mission to dismantle the welfare state that former presidents had established along with less corporate oversight and an economic plan that would later be dubbed “Reaganomics.” In 1980 Reagan signed a bill allowing kids to attend private schools and religious schools with public funds

¹⁷⁷ Oklahoma House, HB 3393, Lindsey Nicole Henry Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program, Law 2010.

¹⁷⁸ Job et al., “CHAPTER SIXTEEN: Dumbing Down the Fly-Over State,” 265.

¹⁷⁹ Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath*, 5.

through vouchers.¹⁸⁰ Both President George H. W. Bush and President Bill Clinton continued this legacy of innovation in education, claiming by extending school choice they were reaching those minority students that were being underserved by the district schools. President H. W. Bush also created the National Goals 2000 program, which was a proponent of privatization, deregulation, and competition between schools and school districts.¹⁸¹ President George W. Bush signed No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2002 and used standardized testing as a way to grade overall school performance. President Barack Obama took it one step further in making these policies federal law with Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015 making standardized testing for all public school students a federal law and using testing data to evaluate teacher performance.¹⁸² This list of decades of federal policy didn't happen by accident and was backed by some of the wealthiest business people in America. We will talk about who these disruptors are and why they got political with education policy a bit later.

Oklahoma tried to resist this push to privatization until they became a national mockery for education.¹⁸³ National rhetoric was that Oklahoma was moving in the wrong direction and did not care enough about education to adopt the national standards and common core into state policy. It wasn't until 1998 when resolution 1657 was one of the first in the nation to have free all day PreK options for Oklahoma families, that Oklahoma gained praise from national disruptors¹⁸⁴ While Oklahoma was slow to open up to privatization of schools it was always a safe haven for those who wanted the least government intervention when it came to homeschooling.¹⁸⁵ Homeschooling really took off after desegregation of schools in the 1960s

¹⁸⁰ Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath*, 15.

¹⁸¹ Rooks, *Cutting School*, 14.

¹⁸² Rooks, *Cutting School*, 15.

¹⁸³ Job et al., "CHAPTER SIXTEEN: Dumbing Down the Fly-Over State," 265.

¹⁸⁴ Job et al., "CHAPTER SIXTEEN: Dumbing Down the Fly-Over State," 260.

¹⁸⁵ Oklahoma Christian's Home Educators Community, accessed: February 22, 2023; Homeschool Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) "Oklahoma Legal Analysis." June 18, 2020.

mostly by conservative republicans and religious families who disagreed with the separation of church and state by the removal of prayer in public schools. But the federal push to privatize education along with the money that came with it became too much of a fighting force. The state standardization process, which led to privatization legislation, was co-opted by corporations like Walmart and Pearson. Unfortunately teacher, parent, and community input was lost in the dialog where corporations won out.¹⁸⁶ In 1990, HB1017 would reduce class sizes and see an equitable distribution of funds while proceeding with uniformed state standards.¹⁸⁷ But between 2008 and 2014 Oklahoma had the deepest education cuts in the nation and HB1017 was no longer recognizable. The state had grown by 40,000 students and to save Oklahoma's education system the disrupters brought in privatization. Oklahoma Statewide Virtual Charter School Board began in 2012 allowing for charters to be opened and use state and federal funds.¹⁸⁸

The Major Players of Education Disruption and the Resistance

In Diane Ravitch's book "Slaying Goliath: The Passionate Resistance to Privatization and the Fight to Save America's Public Schools," she refers to those in favor of privatization as "disruptors."¹⁸⁹ She names them as such since they don't improve or reform our public education system but seek to commoditize it in a free market worth billions of dollars. These disruptors are usually billionaires who seek education policy for privatization for entrepreneurial advances under the guise of innovation. The most famous of these being Bill Gates and the Gates Foundation, the Walton Family of Walmart, the Koch Brothers, Laurene Jobs, Michael Bloomberg, Betsy DeVos of Amway, and more recently Mark Zuckerberg.¹⁹⁰ These billionaires

¹⁸⁶ Job et al., "CHAPTER SIXTEEN: Dumbing Down the Fly-Over State," 258.

¹⁸⁷ Job et al., "CHAPTER SIXTEEN: Dumbing Down the Fly-Over State," 262.

¹⁸⁸ Oklahoma Statewide Virtual Charter School Board, Accessed March 9, 2023.

¹⁸⁹ Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath*, 5.

¹⁹⁰ Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath*, 4.

and their political agenda use fear, uncertainty, and doubt to spread myths about the education system while forgetting about the value of the bonds among schools, families, and communities.¹⁹¹ They work with other large corporations like Pearson and McGraw Hill, to streamline expensive technologies that schools are then forced to buy to implement standardized test preparation and data collection. Their philanthropic “gifts” of money to privatization leads to the destruction of public schools and local districts. These disrupters usually talk about technology innovation with high standards of education for all while ignoring the issues of poverty, ethnic minorities, special education, and ELL students.

On the other side of the battle is what Ravitch called the resistance.¹⁹² The resistance, while made of more people, has much less publicity because they lack the financial resources the disrupters have. The resistance is made up of mostly scholars, researchers, teachers, principles, parents, even students themselves. A few national faces of the resistance are Matt Damon, an American actor, and Jon Stewart, host of the Daily Show, who both support teachers and public education mostly because their moms are public school teachers. Matt Damon narrated the “A Backpack Full of Cash” documentary, which was the rebuttal to “Waiting on Superman” documentary, which praised privatization and charter schools as the saving grace of American schools. The resistance is much more of a grassroots movement at the local and state level of politics. In Oklahoma the resistance includes Priscilla Sanstead who is an Oklahoma parent and cofounder of Badass Teacher Association. Rob Miller, the former Assistant Superintendent at Sand Springs, OK. Richard Cobb from Moore PSD, Claudia Swisher fourth generation teacher and blogger and anonymous blogs by teachers and principals like *Tulsa Teacher* and *Blue Cereal Education*.¹⁹³ The resistance has seen the devastation privatization has had in our urban and rural

¹⁹¹ Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath*, 27.

¹⁹² Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath*, 52.

¹⁹³ Job et al., “CHAPTER SIXTEEN: Dumbing Down the Fly-Over State,” 267-268.

communities as well as our at-risk students. Because they have seen and worked through the devastation the disrupters have caused, they emphatically speak against standardized testing, demonizing teachers, and the privatization of schools. Instead they bring awareness to educational inequity, loss of funding, and the need for actual public school reform for free education to all.

A Manufactured Crisis: What Disruptors Want

The disrupters had the biggest gains in the early 1980s when the Nation at Risk report stated what a deplorable state the public education system was in and that our shortfalls in education were now a threat to national security.¹⁹⁴ A large smear campaign that has lasted through today, has blasted teachers for being lazy, students for not being taught enough, and the community school for failing children.¹⁹⁵ Once the disrupters convinced politicians that the public education system was broken beyond repair, they could step in with the innovative idea of privatization. Where public schools had failed, private and for profit schools would succeed. Our nation would need national standards in order to create national standardized tests to gauge school achievement. With this data, the disrupters aimed to close schools that had low achievement scores and fire teachers and principals whose students did not score well. In doing so, corporations could buy real estate with state and federal funding to open charter schools and voucher private schools. These schools would need new technology, new software and programs to monitor student data and test analysis. The states would need to adopt and buy new standardized curriculum and spend billions of dollars a year on standardized testing. The licenses and professional development training for these standardized data programs can cost individual

¹⁹⁴ U.S. Department of Education by The National Commission on Excellence in Education *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, 1983, 7.

¹⁹⁵ Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath*, 55.

school districts upwards of a million dollars every year. Figure 17 is a teacher's viewpoint of just some of the programs that teachers use daily that require yearly license renewals by the school district. The disrupters, by spreading the myth of a broken public school system, are able to privatize education and make billions of dollars from the government. They want the public to think there is no fixing the public education system and that school choice will allow the families to do what is best for their children, all the while, failing to show any improvement of achievement.

When politicians or education disruptors talk about “the good old days of education,” what they are actually referring to is a time when education was racially segregated with no special education students and marginalized ELL students in religious schools were common.¹⁹⁶ Today, while students have more rigorous math and science standards as they did in the 1950s, they unfortunately get less literature and life skills. The standards have been raised to above what is attainable or even developmentally appropriate for students. Reformers want to remind the public that poverty is the number one factor in student achievement and while innovative privatization sounds good, it only furthers the achievement gap between rich and poor.

Charters Schools, Private Schools, and Homeschooling In Oklahoma

Oklahoma Statewide Virtual Charter School Board began in 2012, even though there were already charter schools and for-profit schools operating in Oklahoma at that time.¹⁹⁷ In Arizona, more than 42% of charters that opened from 1994 to 2015 had closed within a year or two because of fraud or mismanagement.¹⁹⁸ This figure represents billions of government dollars that have been wasted on privatization. In Oklahoma specifically there have been large

¹⁹⁶ Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath*, 15.

¹⁹⁷ Oklahoma Statewide Virtual Charter School Board, Accessed March 9, 2023.

¹⁹⁸ Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath*, 146-148.

investigations on charter fraud pertaining to one of the largest virtual charter schools in the nation, Epic Charter Schools.¹⁹⁹ The founders, who were millionaires in the tech industry, used governmental funds for the school to buy licenses to their own software and programming, making the founders incredibly rich in the process. (Figure 17) This is obviously a conflict of interests, but as research shows, there is little oversight to the funding of these charter and for-profit schools, so this type of fraud happens a lot.

“No Excuse” Charter schools have harsh discipline codes and a high suspension rate of undesirable students, such as ELL and Special Education students.²⁰⁰ Sometimes up to 50% of the student population is expelled from charter and private schools. These are students that the public school has to take by law that negatively impact public school testing scores that charter and private schools don’t have to deal with. Charter schools are also known for high fraud rates of skewed data like 100% graduation rates or test results.²⁰¹ One charter school that claimed to have 100% graduation rates was audited and found that 60% of the graduating class had excessive absences and therefore were ineligible for graduation. The FBI then launched an investigation which found that graduates were missing required credits, and even students who were off track to graduate were allowed to graduate anyway.²⁰² The investigation also found that the charter schools weren’t taking their graduation rates from student enrollment in 9th grade, but the start of 12th grade. Those students who dropped out before their senior years were not calculated in the graduation rate statistics. This type of fraud and high expulsion rate is common in these “No Excuse” charter schools and only harms the students and families they are supposed to serve.

¹⁹⁹ “Epic Responds to Oklahoma Watch,” accessed: March 12, 2023.

²⁰⁰ Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath*, 80.

²⁰¹ Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath*, 79.

²⁰² Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath*, 78.

Virtual online schools are another hurdle for public schools specifically after the pandemic opened up virtual learning as a less controversial, more viable option. Under the description of “personalized learning” we find that virtual schools have literally taken the person out of learning all together.²⁰³ In these schools, students are taught through an online curriculum and rely on self-motivation to keep on pace. Some students have thrived in this environment, like NCAA athletes who need flexible schooling and are highly motivated or those gifted and talented students who have great parental support at home. Other students can come from these institutions with several years of learning loss due to lack of schoolwork and engagement.

What we have found with charter schools is there are no long term benefits to attending a charter school.²⁰⁴ Disruptors in recent years have acknowledged that achievement scores haven’t risen by the use of charter schools but are now switching sides by saying that standardized tests aren’t showing the whole picture of education.²⁰⁵ A report by Roland Fryer Jr of Harvard and Will Dobbie of Princeton titled “Charter Schools and Labor Market Outcomes” has shown that there is relatively no benefit to attending a charter school over the public district schools.²⁰⁶ Diane Ravitch proclaims in her books that the disrupters are on the decline because they can no longer ignore their own data that privatization of schools has been a huge failure and one of the biggest governmental financial losses in history.

Private and religious schools have existed in the United States for centuries. Catholic schools were one of the biggest assets to immigrated students in urban areas of the early 20th century and they did it all without government funding. Today private schools may or may not accept vouchers from the state. In the 1960s southern states instituted “Freedom of Choice plans”

²⁰³ Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath*, 28-29.

²⁰⁴ Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath*, 82.

²⁰⁵ Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath*, 81.

²⁰⁶ Will Dobbie and Roland G. Fryer. *Charter Schools and Labor Market Outcomes*, Journal of Labor Economics Volume 38, Number 4. October 2020, Society of Labor Economists, Economics Research Center/NORC, 2020, 39.

so white students could attend segregated private schools with vouchers.²⁰⁷ These vouchers sometimes came with strings attached to the management of the school as well as achievement testing, but not usually. Because most private and religious schools don't follow state mandates it is harder to track achievement levels of those students. These schools, however, tend to cater to a wealthy and predominantly white population who can afford to send their children there. Both private and religious schools can discriminate against students with disabilities and members of the LGBTQ+ community. Since there is little state oversight, parents who want their students to attend a private or religious school, but aren't accepted, have little recourse.

As mentioned before, homeschooling in Oklahoma has no legality to it all and grew in popularity after racial integration also known as “white flight.”²⁰⁸ Parents can home educate their children in any manner they see fit with no oversight of the local or state governments and with freedom of association.²⁰⁹ Most other states have some sort of accountability regulations in place for homeschooling children. These regulations could be attendance tracking, registering with the local school district, proof of curriculum completion, or even mandatory testing. As a homeschooling mother myself, I love the freedom Oklahoma has offered to homeschooled children, but as a researcher I have to acknowledge the dangers of this governmental freedom. First, taking students out of the district schools hurts funding for that school. The more parents choose to homeschool their children the more state funds the district will forfeit. Second, the public school system is a deterrent to abuse and neglect. Teachers are trained to spot the signs of neglect and abuse and by law, must report suspicions and findings to the school and the state DHS. An extreme example of this is the David and Louise Turpin Case in California (they were

²⁰⁷ Averett, *The Homeschool Choice*, 182.

²⁰⁸ Averett, *The Homeschool Choice*, 18.

²⁰⁹ Oklahoma Christian's Home Educators Community, accessed: February 22, 2023; Homeschool Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) “Oklahoma Legal Analysis,” June 18, 2020; Oklahoma State Department of Education, “Home School” accessed: February 1, 2023.

originally from Texas, another low regulation homeschool state).²¹⁰ In 2018 one of their children managed to escape and alert police to the fact that serious abuse had been happening to all 13 children for years. The Turpins had been “homeschooling” the children which is why the abuse and neglect was able to continue without public notice for so long. Underserved and impoverished students are the most at risk for relying on public schools for food and a compassionate eye looking for neglect or abuse. Last, the dangers of free range homeschooling is that in some cases, no schooling is happening at all. In the world of homeschoolers you have a diversity of educational philosophies, curriculums, and theories. While most homeschool children have just as good outcomes as their public school counterparts, there are those homeschooled children that aren’t being educated at all and will therefore have little prospects of advancement, unless removed from that situation.

“Our national unwillingness to support children and families means that these (homeschool) mothers are accurately identifying a problem: if they did not tenaciously defend their own childrens’ interests, those interests would go unaddressed.”²¹¹ The idea that parents are trying to serve their childrens’ best interests is accurate with a school system that is constantly being defunded and stretched to the limits. But, this decision also stems from a life of privilege. Statistically, homeschool families are middle class, caucasian, with a single income that can support the whole family while the other parent stays home to educate the children.²¹² In recent years Averett, who studies homeschool demographics in Texas, has seen a dynamic shift of homeschooling families to ethnic minorities, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and even single moms. Averett argues that these shifts are because of privatization and the disastrous effects it has on public schools, that parents feel pressured to home educate their children, even if

²¹⁰ Averett, *The Homeschool Choice*, 189.

²¹¹ Averett, *The Homeschool Choice*, 95.

²¹² Averett, *The Homeschool Choice*, 26.

homeschooling is not the best option for the child, the parent will argue it is better than what the public school system can offer.

Standardized Testing, The Backbone of Corporate Education

“I believe in standardizing automobiles. I do not believe in standardizing human beings. Standardization is a great peril which threatens American culture.” - Albert Einstein.

The history of standardized testing goes back to WWI in military use to promote intellectuals to officers and non-intelligent men to foot soldiers.²¹³ We know today that these tests were inherently racist and the majority of African Americans would not do well on these tests and therefore would keep them as foot soldiers instead of officers. But during WWI, scientists and scholars would also use the data from these exams to further perpetuate their ideas and theories on “the inherent mental superiority of Aryans and Npodics, as compared to American blacks and to immigrants from southern and eastern Europe.”²¹⁴

The backbone of the privatization movement was to create national standards and tests to show student achievement and weed out those schools and teachers that were failing America’s students. Standardized testing has shown an only 10% variation in student scores because of teacher effectiveness. The majority of variation in achievement scores comes from “out of school” factors like poverty, homelessness, violence, and English fluency in the home.²¹⁵ As more data is coming out about the failing scores of charter schools the rhetoric is changing directions from standardized testing. Yet, federal policy still makes students between 3-8th grade

²¹³ Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath*, 89-90.

²¹⁴ Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath*, 90.

²¹⁵ Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath*, 56.

take yearly exams in both Reading and Math. The U.S. is the only nation that tests every student yearly in both subjects.

The United Opt Out Movement grew in momentum from the time of NCLB in 2002. In 2013 Jenks Middle School in Jenks Oklahoma allowed parents to opt out of state testing in which over half of the parents did.²¹⁶ In 2014, two teachers in Tulsa refused to give the state student survey stating it was a FERPA violation and refused to administer the district's MAPs testing because 85% of the students would fail it and it was demoralizing to the students.²¹⁷ In 2015 ESSA made it federal law to require tests by federal law which made it illegal to opt out of state standardized testing. The ESSA also stated that the goal was 100% proficiency which was a grossly unattainable goal.²¹⁸ Special education students are subjected to the same testing standards as other students even though they are several grade levels below in learning abilities. Schools with large sped populations are consistently scored lower on the Oklahoma State Report Card because of the special education department. In consequence, most schools try to hand off special education students, by not having enough special education teachers or services, to enhance the schools' scores.

As mentioned before, standards today have exceeded what is developmentally appropriate for students. Today's ELA state test for 3rd grade students includes twelve different multi-paragraph stories or articles, sixty total questions, ten of which are short answer questions where the students must type out on a computer; the other fifty being multiple choice. Most 3rd grade students don't know how to type on a computer and will become frustrated with the process of pecking out their answers into coherent sentences on the keyboard. I have first-hand experience of seeing a 3rd-grade student meltdown during state testing because she couldn't get

²¹⁶ Job et al., "CHAPTER SIXTEEN: Dumbing Down the Fly-Over State," 269.

²¹⁷ Job et al., "CHAPTER SIXTEEN: Dumbing Down the Fly-Over State," 269.

²¹⁸ Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath*, 25.

her answer from her head to the computer since she didn't know how to type. The state test administrator is legally not allowed to interfere in any way with a student's test. Test administrators can only give encouragement by saying "Just do your best," and offering a compassionate smile in these situations. The test makers, billionaires, and other disruptors who are taking billions of government educational dollars a year don't see the harm they are doing to our students. Teachers, on the other hand, see it everyday. I encourage all of you to log into the state test prep site and look at the state testing we are subjecting our 3-8th grade students to for a glimpse of what the ELA state test looks like for a 3rd grade student.²¹⁹ (Figure 18)

An even larger problem with standardized testing and the use of this data to grade schools and teachers is the skewed way students and standards are selected for teaching. For example, while there is a long list of state standards for every subject provided by the state, we also have "most heavily weighted standards" that account for more questions on the test. So, all standards are not created equally and teachers focus on those heavily weighted standards for much more instructional time, sometimes not even getting to the other standards within a school year. We have this practice because it falsely boosts testing scores which will boost the state school report card grade. Also, after benchmark testing (which is done three times a year in addition to mandatory state testing in April and May) and weekly assessments, teachers take that data and assess what students need more help within what standards. Again, we are mostly looking at those heavily weighted standards, but instead of helping those students who need dramatic interventions, we look for students who are close to passing but not passing yet. Why? More bang for our teaching buck! If we work with students who need dramatic intervention, there is a chance they will still not pass the standard because they are scoring so low. But working with a student who is struggling but close to passing, or "on the bubble" as it is more commonly called,

²¹⁹ Oklahoma State Department of Education, "State Practice Tests," accessed: November 17, 2022.

we have a greater chance of instructing them up to passing that standard and again elevating our testing scores. These are strategic teaching methods for standardized testing. Nothing I just said is good for all students, nor is it equitable education, but a farce for the sake of boosting testing scores.

Hundreds of books are written on standardized testing in America and how it is harming all students, let alone our marginalized at-risk student populations. The point is that standardization of testing and curriculum came about because of privatization. We can all only hope that with the decline of privatization we might see the removal of standardized testing as well, before the collapse of public schools.

Privatization and the Profession of Teaching

The disruptors who vouch for privatization claim that teachers are lazy, teacher unions are enabling bad teacher practices, and the use of competition will motivate teachers to want to keep their jobs. Oklahoma's State Education Superintendent, Ryan Walters, was just quoted as calling teacher unions a "terrorist organization" in April of 2023 while saying Oklahoma teachers are "out to indoctrinate our children." Disruptors encourage "quick trained" teacher programs like Teach for America, which is a five week program for those who don't have a teaching degree to become teachers.²²⁰ Disruptors say that since curriculum is standardized there is no longer need for teachers to be educated in teaching. The job of the teacher is done for them with the state standards and common core curriculum. All states now have "emergency" certification processes to get more teachers to the classroom. These actions have only belittled and lowered the status of teachers to that of babysitters. Those who have advanced degrees in Education or their content areas have become dissatisfied with their jobs and are now leaving the profession to

²²⁰ Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath*, 45.

work at educational technology companies as curriculum designers. Unfortunately, while most teachers are highly creative by nature, the job of ‘teacher’ has become increasingly less creative because of standardization. Funds being used for standardized tests and privatization has led to schools lowering teacher pay and creating a pay scale of little advancement for long years of service. Teacher dissatisfaction with teaching to the test instead of the child has left teachers wondering what the point of it all is anymore. The teacher walkouts of 2018 gave a national stage to teacher complaints in Oklahoma, Kentucky, and West Virginia.²²¹ In Oklahoma it is the OSDE 2015 Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Law that created the link between teacher effectiveness by state standardized testing alone.²²² This created a void of teachers in low performing schools and districts, that continue to hurt minority communities.

Even the way we train and educate future teachers is different now. Teacher and education administration graduate degrees are ideologies and practices of business management with a top down management approach instead of advanced pedagogy and education.²²³ Market dominance in education and ideology has reshaped the role of school administrators to “managers” instead of educators.²²⁴ The top down management has harmed the teacher/administrator relationship and again left teachers feeling alone and disgruntled. The profession of teaching has also taken a hit with low enrollments for education majors across the country. Here in Oklahoma, University of Central Oklahoma, which started ironically as a teaching school in the 19th century has now reduced its Education degree offerings and is at risk of closing all together.

²²¹ Valerie Panne, “How privatization sparked the massive Oklahoma teacher Uprising.” In *These Times* (April 10, 2018); Rhonda Harlow, “Lessons Learned from Oral Histories Gathered From the April 2018 Oklahoma Teacher Walkout,” PhD. diss., Oklahoma State University, 2020.

²²² Job et al., “CHAPTER SIXTEEN: Dumbing Down the Fly-Over State,” 266.

²²³ Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath*, 118.

²²⁴ Averett, *The Homeschool Choice*, 93.

When in doubt follow the money. Public schools have a fixed cost but when money is taken away to serve vouchers or charter schools, which is money taken directly from public schools. Schools have to fire teachers which makes class sizes larger or decrease salaries. The loss of funds also creates a loss of resources personnel like reading specialists, nurses, counselors, and special education teachers who all cost more for the district to employ. The jobs that would normally be done by these professionals are put back onto the teachers making their jobs impossible to complete successfully for all students. This leads to a higher rate of teacher burnout for public school teachers and is linked to the high percentage of teachers leaving the profession for tech education jobs. The 2016 Oklahoma Teacher of the Year, Shawn Sheehan, left Oklahoma to move to Texas for over \$10,000/ yr pay increase.²²⁵ Oklahoma politicians might say we have a teacher shortage, whereas teachers may say there is a surplus of teachers, they just don't want to teach under the current conditions of privatization.

Outcomes for Underserved Students, Plus Rural and Urban Districts

Oklahoma used to fly under the educational radar even though it was in the bottom quarter for educational achievement, it was never quite as bad as other states like Alabama or Mississippi.²²⁶ Oklahoma was and remains today a mostly rural state with two urban centers; Tulsa and Oklahoma City, where over 25% of Oklahoma's total population lives.²²⁷ The industry in Oklahoma is big oil and gas corporations that allows people without advanced degrees to earn more than those with degrees. Because of the ruralness of Oklahoma there tends to be less state oversight and more reliance on the local government instead.²²⁸

²²⁵ Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath*, 258.

²²⁶ Job et al., "CHAPTER SIXTEEN: Dumbing Down the Fly-Over State," 256.

²²⁷ Job et al., "CHAPTER SIXTEEN: Dumbing Down the Fly-Over State," 261.

²²⁸ Job et al., "CHAPTER SIXTEEN: Dumbing Down the Fly-Over State," 262.

The reality of Oklahoma is that many students start behind students in other states because of “out of school circumstances” like parent education level, parent employment and income, family’s fluency in English, and prior generational characteristics.²²⁹ But even this setback for Oklahoma students, we still had innovation before privatization came to Oklahoma. For example, Howe Public Schools in spring of 2013 was a rural district known for technological excellence and innovation and dynamic learning in the state. In 2013 the Howe School district was the pride of Oklahoma, but by October of the same year it received an F school rating from the state report card because of state standardized testing.²³⁰ Using standardized testing to punish poor performing schools has hurt our urban and rural school districts immensely.

Vouchers and charter school learning funds are inherently inequitable to underserved populations. For example at Epic Charter Schools the learning fund of \$1,000 can be used per student for educational needs like supplies, curriculum, and books. But students in poverty that need to order technology and mifi will have their accounts deducted for these devices, whereas wealthier peers who don’t need the technology can use the whole fund for extracurricular class or sporting activities. Oklahoma has a high incarceration rate and the state spends twice as much per prisoner than it does on the education funding per student.²³¹ Oklahoma really needs a reality check when it comes to educational funding and where those funds are actually being used. The stripping away of standardized testing would save the state billions of dollars that can then be used to rebuild public schools with resources they need and deserve.

Now that privatization has been around for several decades we can research outcomes to see who has suffered the most from privatization and who has benefited. Unfortunately teachers and the profession of teaching as a whole, students, public schools, and urban ethnic minority

²²⁹ Job et al., “CHAPTER SIXTEEN: Dumbing Down the Fly-Over State,” 263.

²³⁰ Job et al., “CHAPTER SIXTEEN: Dumbing Down the Fly-Over State,” 266.

²³¹ Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath*, 257.

communities have all been irrevocably harmed by the privatization process. Those who have benefited are tech companies, testing and curriculum companies (which has shown a growth of over 5000% profit in the last two decades), owners of for profit schools, the top 1% of the wealthiest business people in America.²³² Unfortunately the consequences of privatization have created very real problems for our underserved urban communities. See Figure 19 for a map of 2019 school closures and those who will be moving locations in the urban district of Oklahoma City Public Schools. The interesting thing is the amount of public school buildings that would be closed or combined with other schools, plus the three charter schools in the district that are all relocating to different locations. This again shows the money to be made for charter schools to buy and sell real estate on the public dime. What is very evident on this map is the sheer number of schools being affected. What the map doesn't show is the implementations of these closures on the community that will surround this vacant building for decades to come. The families that live there and had their children walk to school just stare at the empty building as they have to make accommodations to attend another school. Businesses in the area will also be harmed by the vacant building creating a shelter for those without homes bringing in drug activity into the community while affecting housing prices. We have yet to see all of the community effects privatization will have on our underserved communities and districts as legislation continues to make the issues more grievous instead of more equitable.

NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) in 2015 and again in 2017 stated that achievement scores had not improved since 2007. Coined as, "America's lost decade of educational progress."²³³ The question is now, what do we do? Can we sink money into our

²³² Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath*, 87.

²³³ Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath*, 78.

district schools again to revitalize our underserved communities or has the policy of school choice gone too far?

School Choice and the Family Burden

The term “School Choice” has a nice ring to it. It sounds like parent choice, or best education possible, to most it sounds like “freedom”; a truly American way of education. But is school choice really freedom for the parents of today’s students or yet another myth billionaire proponents of privatization have fed us? It is March as I am writing this and I have the pleasure of seeing my friends, who are also parents, getting their children’s acceptance letters to their first or second choice school here in OKC. These parents have been posting about it for weeks on social media, debating with other parent friends about what school is the absolute best to send their child. Some of the comment threads are exhausting to read through and yes these parents have excel spreadsheets to keep track of the pros and cons about each school including the application process and deadlines. In 2021, the state issued an open district policy that allows parents to apply for schools anywhere in Oklahoma. It is a privilege to make this choice since the consequences of it include transporting your child to that school and back home again every school day for several years. The families that can afford the gas and time to do this task can be considered privileged, since most minority families in Oklahoma do not have that choice.

School choice can also be seen as a form of gender inequality. The time it takes to research, apply, and make those educational choices rest mostly on the mom of the family.²³⁴ Those families that chose a virtual school or homeschooling are now expected to have a parent at home who is responsible for the student’s education. This is also largely put on the mom of the family while dad usually works to provide for the family in these situations. This inequality can

²³⁴ Averett, *The Homeschool Choice*, 94.

be felt by the mom who puts her own furthering education or career goals on hold to bear the responsibility of school choice.

Because parents have this choice and most parents have an inherent need to make the best choices for their kids, so with standardized testing comes Oklahoma School Grades Annual Report Card that is based largely on state standardized scores; schools can get bonus points by good attendance rates and AP courses taken at the school.²³⁵ This is how many parents start to research what schools are “good” and what schools are “bad”. When on the website for Oklahoma school grades you can also look up your student’s information.²³⁶ The link will lead you to the state testing site where you can find your student’s state testing scores.²³⁷ The truth of the matter is a student who has a privileged family life will do well in no matter what school they are placed in and just as true is a student who is living in poverty or an ethnic minority community member, they have just as much risk of failing out of a good school as they do a bad school. School choice has effectively put parents against public schools since schools are no longer meeting students' needs.²³⁸

When looking at the privatization of schools and school choice we need to ask ourselves if we would do the same with other public services. For example, think of the city service of maintaining our roads. Even though we may complain about the pothole we hit the other day, would we ourselves take our time and money to repair the road when it is a service provided by the city and state? Since privatization has been around for several decades, we may be desensitized to the insanity of paying for something our taxes are to be paying for. The disruptors

²³⁵ Job et al., “CHAPTER SIXTEEN: Dumbing Down the Fly-Over State,” 266.

²³⁶ Oklahoma School Report Card Search Site, accessed: March 12, 2023.

²³⁷ Oklahoma School Testing Program Site, accessed: March 12, 2023.

²³⁸ Averett, *The Homeschool Choice*, 14.

would be doing society a great service if they actually gave funds to repair and improve our public schools, not tear them down in place of corporate ones.

Conclusion

While we see privatization decreasing in some states, we are seeing it expand here in Oklahoma. Senate Bill 822 or the Education Freedom Act, which was introduced January 2023, would create the Oklahoma Education Freedom Account Program.²³⁹ Another bill that is almost identical is Senate Bill 943, The Oklahoma Parent Empowerment Act for Kids (OK PEAK), which was also introduced just this January 2023.²⁴⁰ If either of these bills passed into law, the account program would divert more public school funds to students who are registered as homeschooled or private school students, to use for educational materials and curriculum, among other things. These bills would further harm our public schools that are already desperate for funding, most of which are those schools serving underserved and impoverished students.

Although I am a partaker of school choice in the state of Oklahoma, I am also vastly aware that I live a privileged life and the current state of school choice is entirely inequitable. Diane Ravitch states, “Public schools belong to the public and they should be properly supported by the public because they are our investment in the future of our democracy.”²⁴¹ Privatization of schools changes us from citizens to consumers and our students are the product of this market economy and it is a multibillion dollar a year industry.²⁴² Kate Henley Averett in her book, *The Homeschool Choice: Parents and the Privatization of Education*, states: “School choice model has ironically resulted in increased standardization of schools, with a corresponding decrease in

²³⁹ Oklahoma. Senate, Education Freedom Act of 2023, SB 822. 59th Legislature, 1st sess. Introduced in the Senate by Daniels, January 19, 2023.

²⁴⁰ Oklahoma. Senate, Oklahoma Parent Empowerment Act for Kids Program (OK PEAK), 2023. SB 943. 59th Legislature, 1st sess. Introduced in the Senate by Jett, January 19, 2023.

²⁴¹ Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath*, 11.

²⁴² Ravitch, *Slaying Goliath*, 172.

individual and collective efficacy of teachers to advocate for their students.”²⁴³ As a researcher and mother of four children, I would love to live a life where I can rely on the public education system to teach my children and keep them safe during school. As their mom, I would be free to work outside of the home and really make a career for myself. The point isn’t my opinion or point of view, the point is that our state should provide equitable education and safe schools for *all* students in Oklahoma. The system of privatization is unfortunately inequitable and harms our underserved students, those students in poverty, and our minority communities.

Chapter 5

²⁴³ Averett, *The Homeschool Choice*, 13.

Positive Policy Change For Improving Minority Achievement Outcomes Through The Science of Reading

Introduction

It is easy to say that America is in need of educational reform and policy that will give equitable access to students, since the data is undeniable that our current education system is not only inequitable, but less than adequate for most students. However, it is harder to pinpoint an exact solution to “fix” the problems we are seeing, mostly due to the fact that there are an overwhelming amount of problems with our current system, plus a wide array of strong opinions on how to fix them. Researchers, analysts, and experts can present their findings and lecture about clever solutions to our educational crisis, but education reform and policy become heavily politicized between the left and right wings of politics. This process leads to stalemates in real educational initiatives that have the potential to be successful. It would also be easy to look to the best performing countries such as Finland and China, and strive for imitation and implementation of their school policies, albeit they are very different education systems when compared. Nevertheless, this would be a mistake considering those countries are systematically different from the U.S. in our population demographics, socioeconomic and wealth gaps, and government social welfare programs. What works for Finland and China, wouldn't necessarily work for America. I argue that the optimum way to successfully close the achievement gap for ethnic minorities is through the curriculum implementation of the Science of Reading and early literacy initiatives.

Frederick Douglass stated, “Once you learn to read, you will forever be free.” As a former slave prohibited by law from reading and writing, he understood the importance of literacy in order to break the chains of generational poverty, homelessness, and imprisonment.

Reading is the greatest equalizer in the world and opens the door to all subject content in education. Knowing this, why are 66% of children failing reading proficiency tests?²⁴⁴ What are our schools doing wrong and how can we turn literacy around in the state of Oklahoma?

Historiography

Living in the information age means that the tool of choice for advancement in social status and for generational well being is through literacy. Every president since the 1960s has mentioned the importance of reading and writing achievements while not acknowledging the science developed behind how we learn to read. Considering that scientists, journalists, historians, sociologists, and teachers have all been talking about the science of reading for decades it seems to have fallen on deaf political ears and escaped political rhetoric. Researchers such as Natalie Wexler who wrote *The Knowledge Gap*, and co-created *The Writing Revolution* teacher training curriculum, has been an outspoken advocate for the science of reading and content rich writing for American students.²⁴⁵ E.D. Hirsch Jr., chairperson for the Core of Knowledge, has gone as far to compile lists of expected general background knowledge for students to be successful in school, only to be criticized as a progressive left-winged hinchman.²⁴⁶ These researchers argue that the vocabulary and background knowledge deficiency we see in students from impoverished homes, ethnic minorities, and ELL students are continuing to contribute to a widening gap of achievement and reading fluency. (Figure 20) Wexler's solution is a standardized systematic reading and writing instructional program, nationwide, that focuses on phonics, vocabulary building, which is content rich in history and science. Non

²⁴⁴ NAEP Report Card: 2022 NAEP Reading Assessment, accessed July 12, 2023.

²⁴⁵ Natalie Wexler, *The Knowledge Gap: The Hidden Cause of America's Broken Education System and How to Fix It*, (New York: Avery, 2019); *The Writing Revolution*, "Research", accessed July 5, 2023, <https://www.thewritingrevolution.org/method/research/>.

²⁴⁶ Core Knowledge, "E.D. Hirsch, Jr.," accessed July 18, 2023, <https://www.coreknowledge.org/about-us/e-d-hirsch-jr/>.

profits, like “LearnUp” from San Francisco and its founder Steve Tattum, have been training students in the science of reading and explicit phonic instruction for decades. Kareem Weaver, an NAACP education committee director, worked with teachers and the school board to implement a Science of Reading curriculum for more equitable education opportunities for ELL students and ethnic minorities. His newest endeavor was creating “The Right To Read” film to bring public awareness to this decades-long crisis.²⁴⁷ On the other hand, Lucy Calkins, the author of the “Units of Study” Curriculum, has been a powerful rival of Science of Reading and instead promotes “whole language”. Her curriculum, which had been forcefully implemented across the U.S. as the K-8th curriculum of choice, has continued to contribute to our student’s decline in literacy and spelling competency for decades.²⁴⁸ In the reading wars, Lucy Calkins along with Rudolf Flesch and Frank Smith were some of the most outspoken about teaching reading through “whole language” and not phonologically like Tattum and Wexler.²⁴⁹ Although there have been vast differences of opinions on *how* to teach reading, there has never been an argument about the importance of reading itself and its need for improvement within schools.

The Reading Wars

When talking about the reading wars most scholars look to the time period in which the fight for reading curriculum was its loudest; the nineties. Regrettably for our minority students of color this fight started centuries ago. During slavery, it was illegal to teach an enslaved person how to read and write. Alabama slave code of 1833 states: “[S31] *Any person who shall attempt*

²⁴⁷ *The Right To Read*, directed by Jenny Mackenzie (2023; Levar Burton Entertainment, 2023) Accessed July 14, 2023, <https://www.therighttoreadfilm.org/>.

²⁴⁸ Dana Goldstein, “In the Fight Over How to Teach Reading, This Guru Makes a Major Retreat,” *New York Times*, May 22, 2022, accessed: June 18, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/22/us/reading-teaching-curriculum-phonics.html>; Units of Study. accessed July 1, 2023, <https://www.unitsofstudy.com/>.

²⁴⁹ Wexler, *The Knowledge Gap*, 69.

to teach any free person of color, or slave, to spell, read or write, shall upon conviction thereof by indictment, be fined in a sum of not less than two hundred fifty dollars, nor more than five hundred dollars.”²⁵⁰ Learning to read and write threatened slavery and the suppression of people of color. When it comes to race in America, reading has always been part of the war.

The curriculum war on reading can be dated back to the fifties and the idea of “whole language” instruction. Whole language is the idea that reading can be taught through memorizing whole words and not teaching children the individual phonics of letters. If a student came upon a word they didn’t know they could use context clues, pictures, or just guess to fill in the blanks. People who held this school of thought, like Lucy Calkins, believed that the teaching of phonics was trivial, unnecessary, and made students dislike reading in general. Curriculum was created and sold to the nation as the peak of reading literacy education. In the nineties, the battle between whole language and phonics came to a head with the introduction of No Child Left Behind, national standardization of curriculum, and state tests. Publishers seized this opportunity to make millions on standardized curriculums, and Whole Language won the political battle as the standard curriculum of choice for our nation. Since then, we have seen no improvement in reading scores and a widening achievement gap of underserved student population groups. This whole language approach has led to an entire generation of Americans ignorant of the foundations of reading and phonics, and in turn, are clueless about how to teach reading to their own children.²⁵¹ The reading epidemic has caused the creation of new job titles like Reading Specialist and Literacy Coach within school districts. These individuals hold advanced degrees and extensive training in the science of reading plus additional certifications in order to help repair the damage done by whole language curriculums.

²⁵⁰ State of Alabama, “Selections from Alabama's Laws Governing Slaves,” *SHEC: Resources for Teachers*, accessed July 15, 2023.

²⁵¹ Goldstein, “In the Fight Over How to Teach Reading, This Guru Makes a Major Retreat.”

What is the science of reading?

Science of Reading or SOR is systematic, explicit, and intentional phonics instruction through content rich material with the intent to build vocabulary and background knowledge in the early grades. Content rich meaning pulling from nonfiction texts in both History and Science that is composed of academically rich and specific vocabulary. Having students in this type of curriculum not only teaches them to read, spell, and write more fluently and effectively, it provides them with the background knowledge they need to be successful in all subject content areas in the later years of education. The pinnacle of reading instruction is during the third grade because learning to read changes systematically to reading to learn. If students are not reading proficiently by then they have a much higher chance of being labeled as special education and even dropping out of school.

The Science of Reading pulls from the National Reading Panel's five pillars of literacy: Phonemic Awareness; Phonics; Fluency; Vocabulary; Comprehension.²⁵² Some may say this is an oversimplification of the roadmap to literacy and reading comprehension, but I argue these basics are still not put into practice in most U.S. classrooms thanks in large part to lingering 'whole language' curriculum, but also due to teachers' lack of phonetic training and classroom implementation. A large portion of teachers today grew up between 1960 and 2000 when most schools used whole language instruction and were therefore never taught the Science of Reading themselves. This poses a huge challenge to educators today who struggle to teach what they themselves don't know. Sadly, SOR courses in teacher college programs are usually reserved for

²⁵² National Reading Panel, "Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment on the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction." accessed: June 25, 2023, <https://www.nichd.nih.gov/sites/default/files/publications/pubs/nrp/Documents/report.pdf>, 19-25.

graduate students seeking a reading interventionist certification and not for those undergraduate students who are earning their bachelor's in early childhood education.

Why does this matter to ethnic minority student populations?

In 2022, only 33% of American fourth grade students scored at or above proficiency which was a drop from 2019.²⁵³ An even sadder statistic is the drop of students from the 'basic' category to the 'below basic' achievement category. (Figure 21) Over a third of our American students cannot grasp basic foundational reading skills while in the fourth grade. The percentage is even higher when looking at low performing states such as Oklahoma who had a reading proficiency score of only 24% in 2022.²⁵⁴ When looking at ethnic minorities the statistics get even more dire. In Oklahoma, only 12% of Black and 15% of Hispanic students scored proficient or above on the fourth-grade reading assessment. (Figures 22 and 23)

These statistics tell us a few things about our reading education system and curriculum. First, our reading education system is failing two thirds of students. Second, since all students are struggling it is harder to separate those with learning differences and those who just aren't being taught properly or have the background knowledge reading comprehension requires. The consequence is the rise of mislabeling ethnic minority and ELL students as special education. This process seems harmless enough until you look at the data. Once a student is labeled as special education, student confidence tends to hinder their schoolwork and experience even further. Because remediation might be needed for a specific content area, sometimes our special education programs are being used for low-income students that just haven't had the educational

²⁵³ The Nation's Report Card, "NAEP Report Card: 2022 NAEP Reading Assessment," accessed: July 10, 2023, <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/highlights/reading/2022/>.

²⁵⁴ The Nation's Report Card, "NAEP Report Card: 2022 Reading State Snapshot Report - Oklahoma - Grade 4," accessed: July 10, 2023, <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/stt2022/pdf/20230100K4.pdf>.

opportunity their peers have had.²⁵⁵ Poverty is one of the strongest factors to student success and achievement performance.²⁵⁶

Battle for Background Knowledge

Natalie Wexler along with other SOR proponents like E.D. Hirsch Jr., have been loud about the achievement gap and that correlation with background knowledge.²⁵⁷ One study, done in 1987 by Wisconsin researchers Donna Recht and Lauren Leslie, set up a scenario to see just how much background knowledge influences reading achievement scores. Students of all reading levels were brought in to read a text about a baseball scenario. The results were that prior knowledge about baseball made a huge impact on student achievement reading comprehension and outcomes. Students who were labeled as “good readers” but did not have background knowledge about baseball scored poorly, but the students who did have prior knowledge about the game of baseball scored really well no matter what their reading level was.²⁵⁸ Studies like this are instrumental in researching why our achievement reading scores are so low for most students, not just our ethnic minority students.

This past year in Oklahoma, 3rd grade students had twelve reading passages and two of them were about buffalo. If students didn’t learn about buffalo in class, their chances of scoring proficient on those questions declined significantly. In the state of Louisiana, they have implemented a state test outline of content for teachers in the form of guidebooks.²⁵⁹ These guidebooks instruct teachers of what explicit content will be on the next year’s state test so they

²⁵⁵ Laura A. Schifter, “Students from Low-Income Families and Special Education,” (The Century Foundation, January 17, 2019).

²⁵⁶ Marguerite Roza, *Educational Economics: Where do School Funds Go?* (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press, 2010), 20.

²⁵⁷ Wexler, *The Knowledge Gap*, 29-30.

²⁵⁸ Wexler, *The Knowledge Gap*, 29-30 and 55.

²⁵⁹ Department of Education, “Louisiana Believes, ELA Guidebooks,” accessed July 21, 2023, <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/academics/ela-guidebooks>.

can prepare children with ample background knowledge. This communication between the state department of education and the teachers is going to allow Louisiana students to access prior knowledge on the state reading exams with the hopes of improving achievement scores.

Currently Oklahoma, while having general ELA standards, does not provide any information of what content material will be on the state reading tests for the different grade levels. There are some who would argue that by not communicating state testing content state education officials are intentionally driving down scores in hopes of passing privatization legislation.

Conclusion

As it stands, there is a huge disconnect between sound reading research, public education policy, and classroom implementation. There are five policies that research shows could dramatically improve reading scores for all students, not just underserved or ELL students.

First, vocabulary and reading literacy starts from birth and at home. Programs like LENA, an early talk program that specifically targets children from birth through 3 years of age, should be available to parents across the country.²⁶⁰ States and local governments could hold education courses for parents about the importance of early talk and how to promote literacy at home from the beginning, not just when students start school. Most parents care about their children's education but are often ill equipped or uneducated about how to help facilitate learning within the home. Since literacy starts at home from birth, we need to help parents and guardians be successful in being the child's first teacher. This program should be free and available to all guardians in our community with children under the age of three.

²⁶⁰ LENA Team, "New research links early vocabulary skills to teacher-child interaction in preschool classrooms," LENA Blog, January 3, 2023, accessed July 5, 2023, <https://www.lena.org/new-research-links-early-vocabulary-skills-to-teacher-child-interaction-in-preschool-classrooms/>.

Second, national standardized curricula should be based on the Science of Reading which would include explicit phonics instruction with content rich academic vocabulary building in grades K-3.²⁶¹ Whole language instruction should be abandoned since it is proven to not be a successful way to teach reading. Since we know content and background knowledge are also factors in reading performance, Science and Social Studies should be funneled into ELA class time. Science and Social Studies in the early elementary grades are usually pushed to the wayside since teachers are spending most of instruction time on Math and Reading.²⁶² With SOR curriculum teachers can now bring nonfiction content back into Reading instruction time. This process would not only increase academic vocabulary but enhance student’s background knowledge, while students master ELA standards.

The next policy to implement, is higher qualifications for early childhood care providers. As of 2019, over twelve million children, under the age of five, attend childcare institutions during the day.²⁶³ Although there is licensing for these childcare centers, the quality of providers and training in early childhood education is low. These providers should also take part in training such as LENA, along with early literacy phonics programs such as LETRS, UFLI, or LearnUp.²⁶⁴

The last state or federal policy that would be recommended implementing is teacher training. Unfortunately for teachers who grew up in the 1980s and 90s, they were never taught using the Science of Reading but instead using ‘whole language.’ Teacher colleges and universities must mandatory SOR literacy instructional classes to their required courses for future teachers. Teachers who are already certified need to have in-depth professional

²⁶¹ Heather Hollingsworth, “Why more U.S. schools are embracing a new ‘science of reading’,” PBS NewsHour, April 20, 2023, accessed July 5, 2023.

²⁶² Wexler, *The Knowledge Gap*, 93.

²⁶³ Child Care Aware of America. “The US and the High Price of Childcare: An examination of a broken system,” accessed July 10, 2023.

²⁶⁴ University of Florida Literacy Institute (UFLI), “About Our Research,” accessed July 5, 2023, <https://ufl.edu/about/#our-research>; LearnUp, “Program Overview,” accessed July 5, 2023, <https://www.learnupcenters.org/program>.

development to learn these techniques and best practices. One professional development day with an hour of guest speaking will not make the difference that is needed. SOR training needs to be in depth with classroom content and lessons available for use. For example, the state of Oklahoma has already provided some of this type of training through Lexia LETRS, but so far this program has had low attendance from Oklahoma teachers. The main reason behind the low attendance is due to teachers volunteering their time outside of school hours with no incentive to complete the training, and the fact it is a two year commitment. In response to this need, teachers have gone to social media platforms such as Facebook groups, to build community and learn from each other. (Figure 24)

The last policy that should be implemented is content communication between our Oklahoma State of Education Department and Oklahoma teachers. The state should disclose what content will be used on the state reading tests for each grade level in order for teachers to directly teach the needed content knowledge. This isn't giving the students a leg up, it is merely leveling the playing field and encouraging accurate reading achievement scores for all students.

These may seem like big reaches and expensive programs to make available to Oklahoma teachers and students, but the reality is the funds are already there but used on reading curriculum that isn't working. Diverting funds to the SOR curriculum and programs that are proven to teach reading to all students would be a better use of state and national resources and solve our literacy crisis in America. If these five policies are implemented into state and national education policy we will see a dramatic difference in reading achievement scores and equitable education in the U.S.

Conclusion

After several years of researching education policy and reform nationally and in the state of Oklahoma, I argue that through past policy and reform we can see what systemic damage has been done to our public education system concerning the outcomes from underserved student populations. Education in America has never been inclusive for all people and historically has been encouraged only for the rich, white, and privileged. Desegregation and the “white flight” of middle and upper class, white citizens out of Oklahoma City and into Edmond proves the deeply racist start to the privatization of education in Oklahoma. Privatization is harmful to students, schools, and ethnic minority communities themselves. Controversies between districts and state courts in specific cases of equality vs equity prove how education reforms harm underserved communities such as ethnic minorities, impoverished students, special education students, and those in the LBGTQ+ community.

While I have argued that much of historical policy and reform have done little to close the achievement gap for our underserved students and in many cases, it has actually caused more harm, I also feel hopeful that someday the public education system will get better. My own motivations propelled me into this topic for my research. The timeliness of these persistent issues is what I really want people to acknowledge and understand. The same arguments about policy and reform are being recycled repeatedly each decade. We might allude our governmental educational policy to that of an amused mouse, racing on a spinning wheel; feeling powerful and accomplished but getting nowhere in the process. Although most of my research is a bit depressing and pessimistic about where our public schools have been and are headed, I am still hopeful that good change can happen.

As I am writing this in 2024 more schools are adopting Science of Reading programs and universities are beginning to teach systematic reading education to new teachers. I am finishing

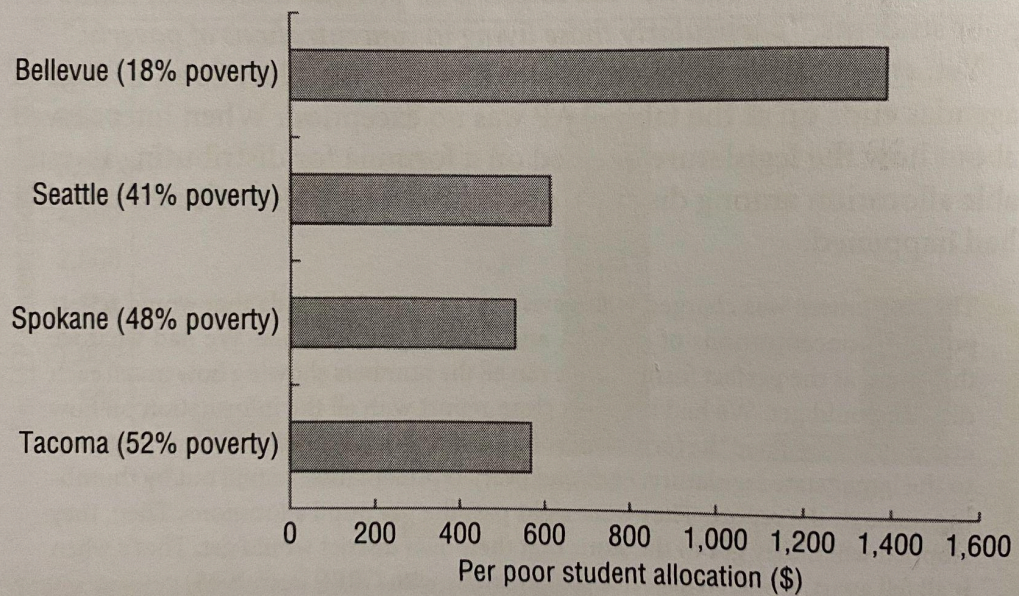
the LETRS two-year professional development micro credential program through the state of Oklahoma education department, learning about literacy instruction and SOR. The school, where I am employed, just created a new department for intense literacy intervention. Already, after six months of classes, we have seen mind blowing growth in our students.

These types of stories inspire me to believe that there is good in the education policy realm, even if my research has exposed some of the worst of it. As I tell my students, history is about seeing things on a spectrum. We might want to write about the extremes because they are the most interesting and proving of our arguments, but all history is really a spectrum of color and not nearly as black and white as we might think. My ideas for future policy and reform may never fully come into fruition, but I am hopeful that more outspoken researchers and advocates will shout a rallying cry for national and state change.

Appendix

Figure 1: Once the state of Washington passed their bill to channel more state funds to schools with higher poverty rates, the mathematical formula for per student allotment agreed upon actually awarded the most funds to districts with the lowest level of students in poverty.

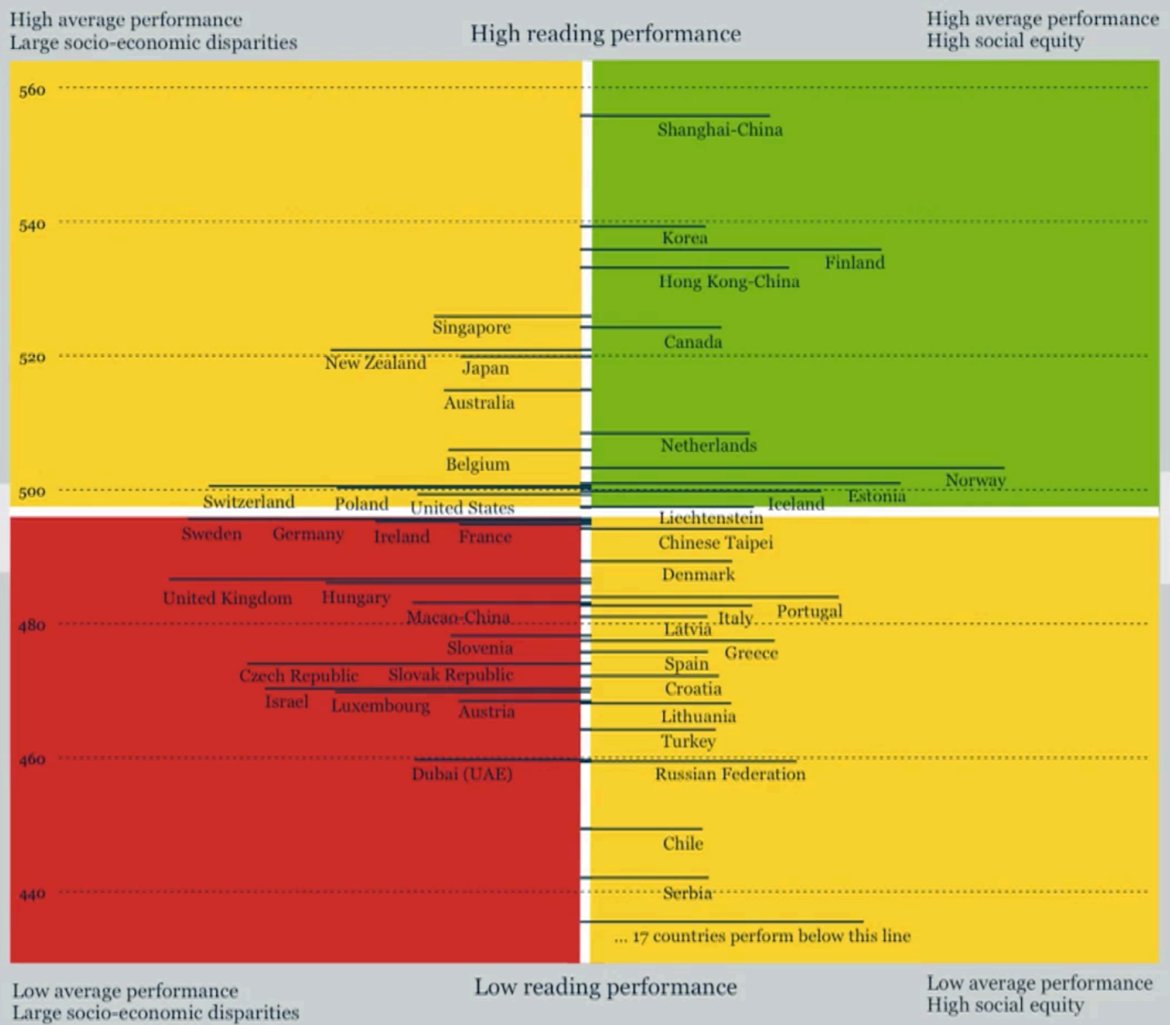
Figure 3.3. State-Allocated Poverty Funds per Poor Student, Washington



Source: Author's calculations based on Roza, Guin, and Davis (2008).

Figure 2: A chart from the PISA Results of 2012. This is showing that not only is the United States at the bottom of average reading scores, but we also have a large socio-economic disparity in our education system.

Average performance of 15-year-olds in reading



Schleicher, Andreas. TEDGlobal. *Use Data to Build Better Schools*, 2012

https://www.ted.com/talks/andreas_schleicher_use_data_to_build_better_schools?utm_campaign=tetspread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

Figure 3: From the US Census Bureau, this chart shows the percentage of US Children labeled with a disability by race. The poorest communities such as American Indian and African American are a higher percentage than races such as White or Asian.

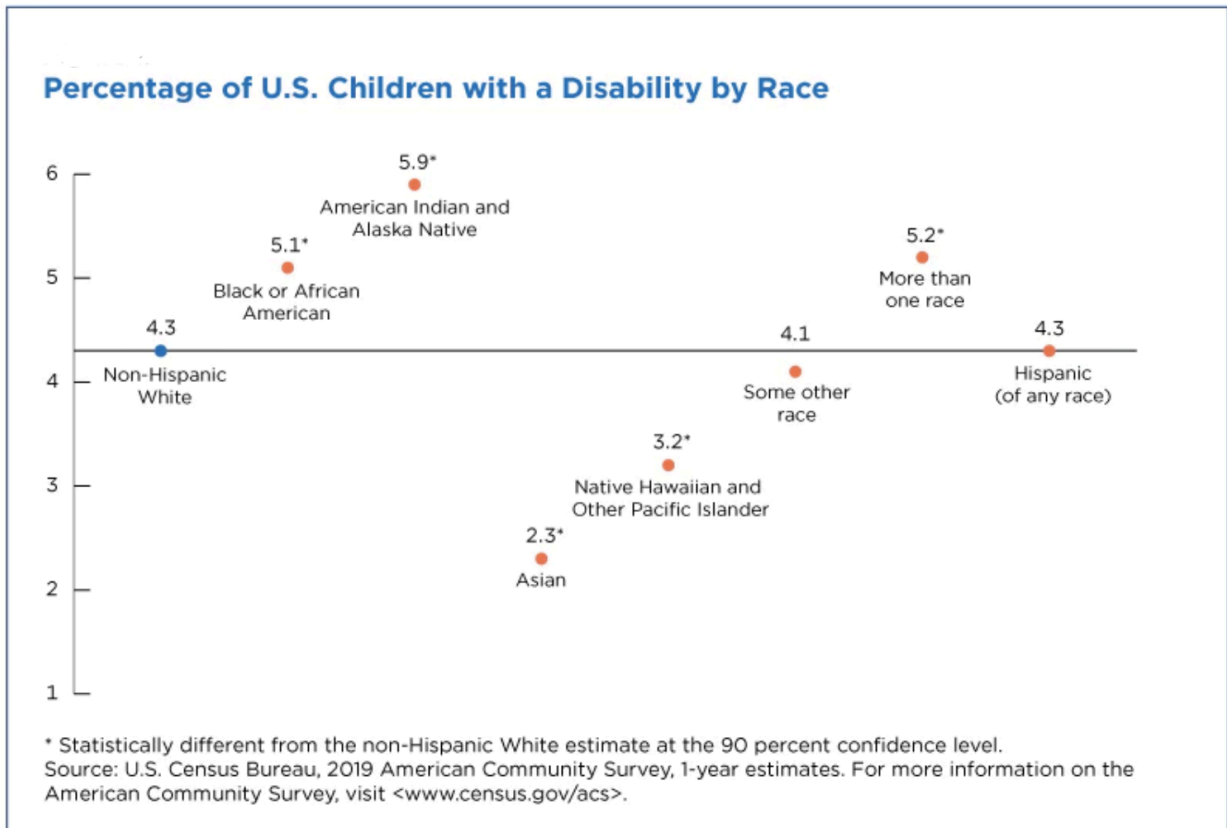


Figure 4: This chart from The Century Foundation, shows the discrepancy specifically between low-income students and the higher rates of labeling as special education. This has lasting effects on low income students, their confidence and self esteem, and the rest of their educational journey.

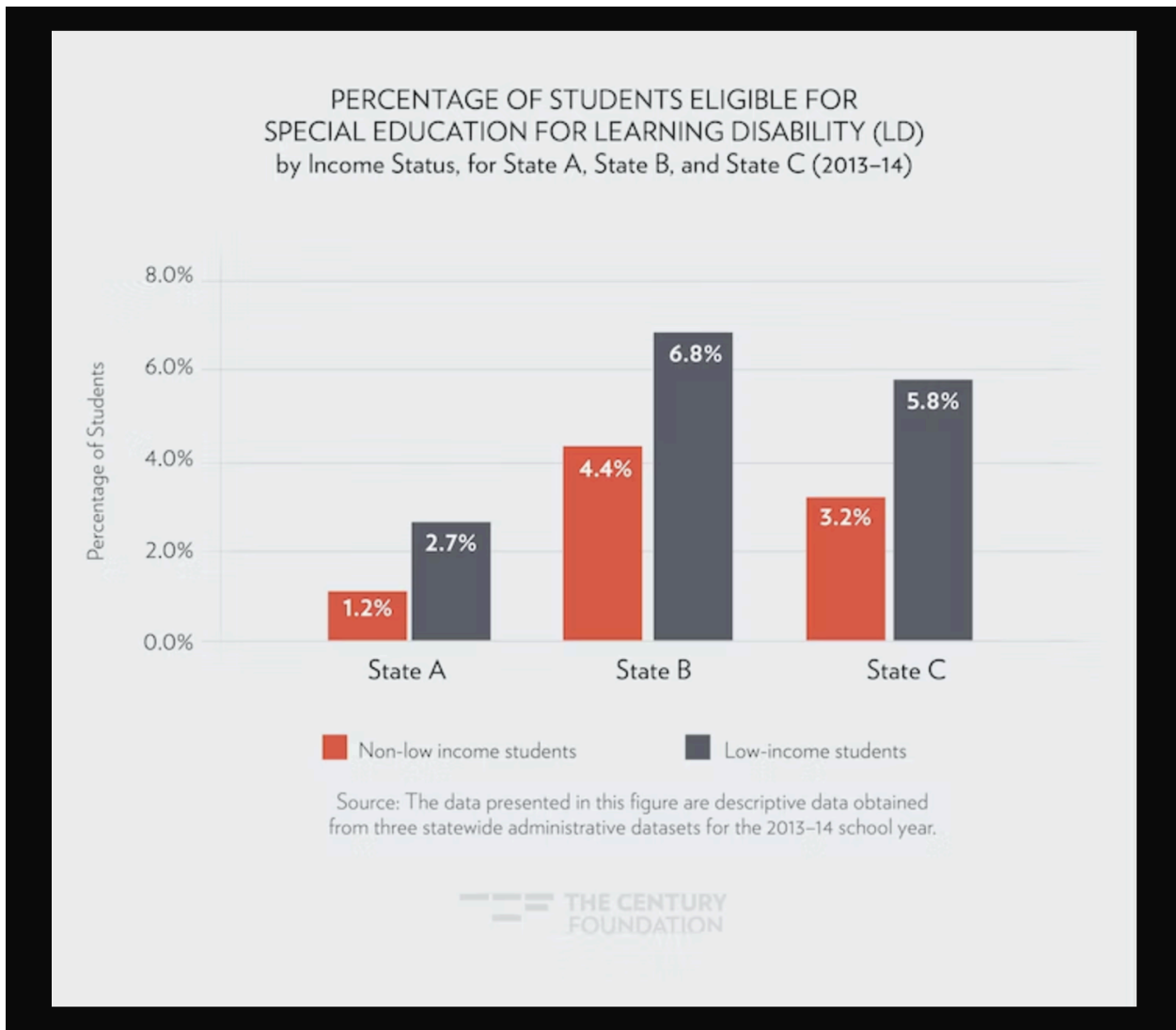


Figure 5: While this chart shows the distribution of special education services by disability category it is most important to recognize the difference between low-income students and non-low income students in the category of Emotional Disability.

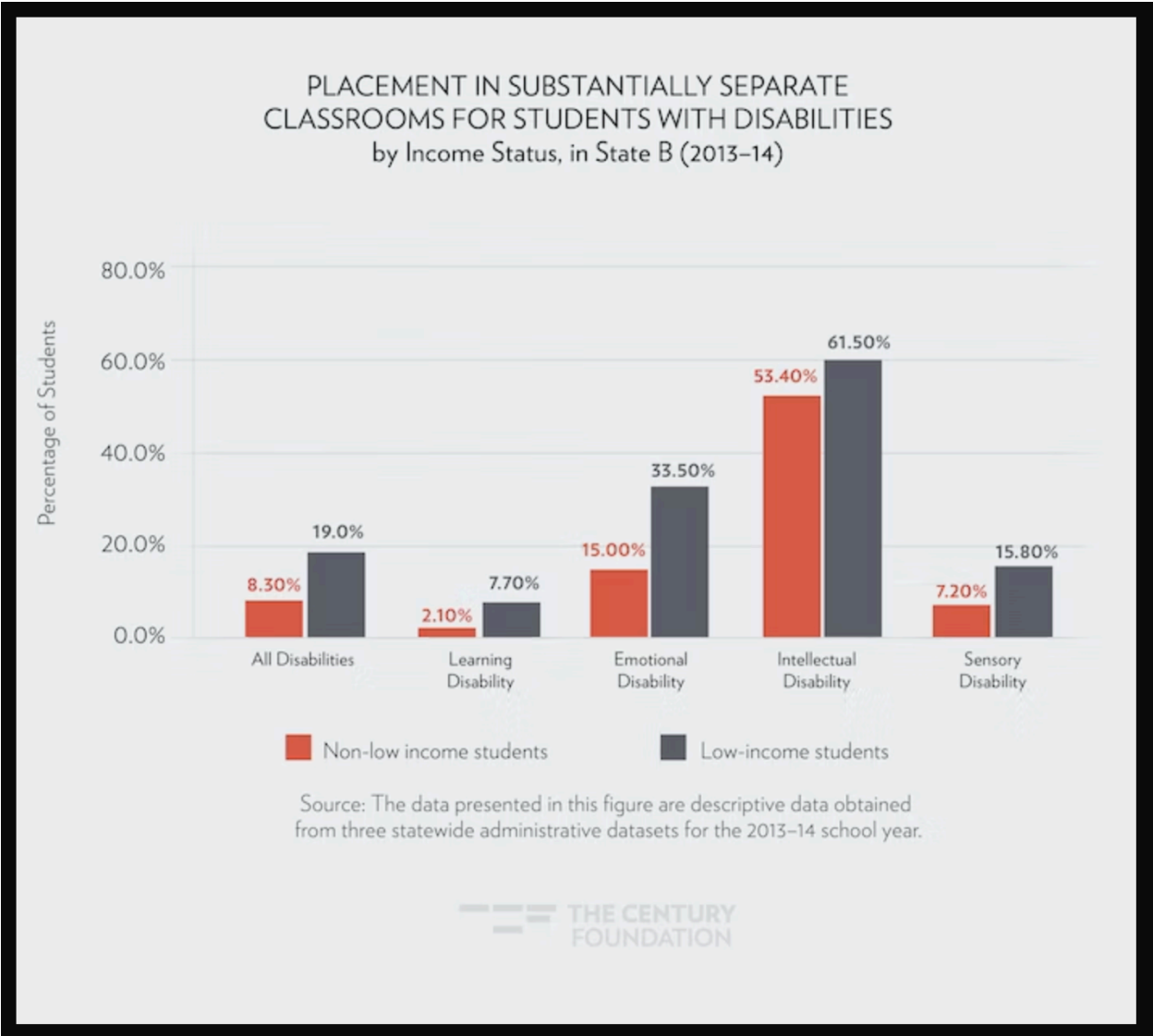
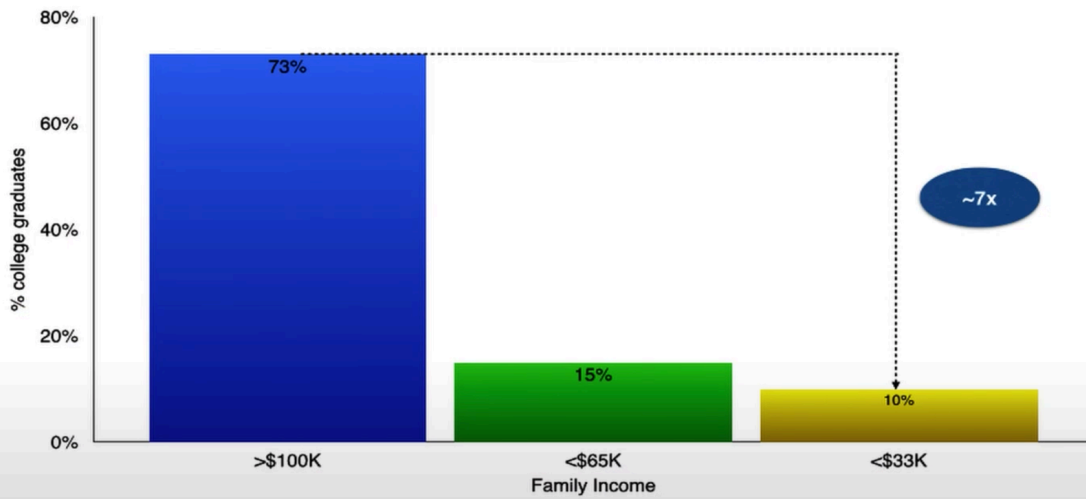


Figure 6: We can see the significant gap in students going to college based on their family income, with the most difference between a household income of less than 65,000/year.

The real experts of education reform | Oliver Sicat | TEDxOrangeCoast

Our Challenge



Close the college completion gap

There is a significant gap in college graduation rates between low-income and high-income families.

Source: Mortenson, Tom. "Bachelor's Degree Attainment by Age 24 by Family Income Quartiles, 1970 to 2010." <http://www.postsecondary.org>. Underlying data sources: Current Population Survey, U.S. data for 2010 compiled with assistance of Kurt Bauman, Chief, Education and Social Stratification Branch, U.S. Census Bureau.; Roderick, Melissa, et al. "From High School to the Future: A First Look at Chicago Public School Graduate's College Enrollment, College Graduation, and Graduation from Four-Year Colleges." 2006

Figure 7: Letter from Charles Clem thanking the citizens of Edmond for the donation of 175 books for the library of a colored school.

<p style="text-align: center;">A Letter of Thanks.</p> <p>I desire to say to my friends of Edmond and vicinity who so generously assisted me in establishing my school library, that words are inadequate to express my gratitude. What you did cannot be over-estimated nor shall it be soon forgotten. I well knew that Edmond, standing as it does in the front rank of educational centres of the West, could not afford to look unfavorably upon any educational effort. But that the people who are supposed to consider a Negro boy, or girl, as intended only for the humbler walks of life, should respond so liberally to the Macedonian cry, shows more plainly</p>	<p>than words could possibly express, that you have the progressive ideas, benevolent spirit and fraternal feeling which will be necessary to meet and master the complicated problems of the Twentieth Century.</p> <p>The school library which before consisted of one dictionary, now has 175 volumes, half of which are neatly bound books, covering subjects from Cinderella to Richter's Chemistry. The others are the leading magazines of the country.</p> <p>For these and your kindly interest in our behalf, in the name of the school I again thank you.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">C. D. CLEM.</p>
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Letter by Charles Clem published in the March 16, 1900 edition of the *Edmond Sun-Democrat*

Figure 8: Map of Oklahoma’s All-Black Towns and Settlements; Oklahoma Historical Society

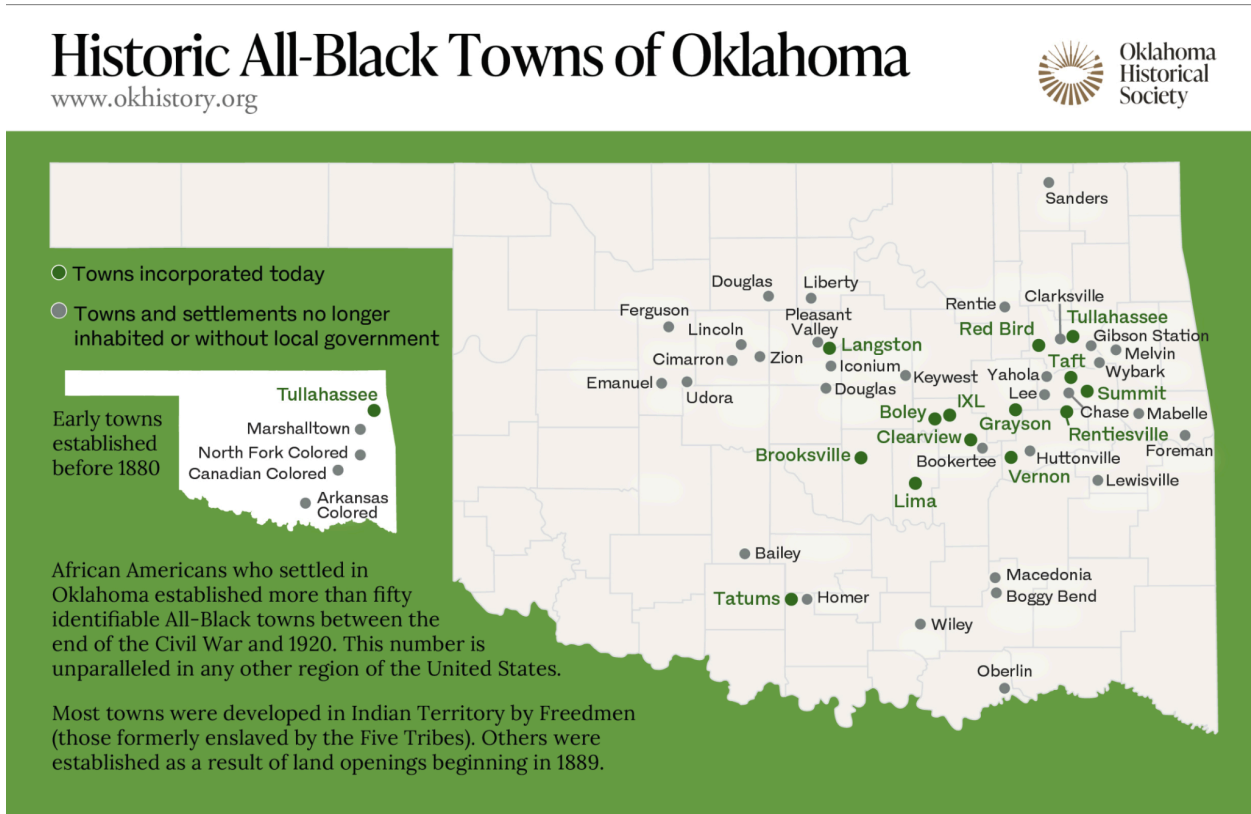


Figure 9: *Oklahoman* newspaper, November 4, 1937. “The KKK In Edmond.” Edmond History Museum. <https://www.edmondhistory.org/the-kkk-in-edmond/>



This photo, which appeared in the November 4, 1937 issue of the *Oklahoman* newspaper, was taken at the intersection of highways 66 and 77, today located around the intersection of I-35 and 2nd Street. The caption for the photograph read:

275 INVISIBLE—The white-robed brothers of the invisible empire rode again Wednesday night. In cars they rode to the intersections of U.S. highways 66 and 77, three miles east of Edmond. There, 25 of them (count 'em) stood on a cliff beside a fiery cross, symbol of the Ku Klux Klan and attracted the eyes of passing motorists, not many of whom were interested enough to stop for a better look. J.W. Reed, grand dragon, said, however, the boys back in the wooded area behind the cliff weren't just standing around. He said they were giving the secrets of the order to 32 men being initiated. He said the brothers at the meeting numbered 300.

Figure 10: Royce Cafe Postcard, c 1940. Oklahoma Historical Society.

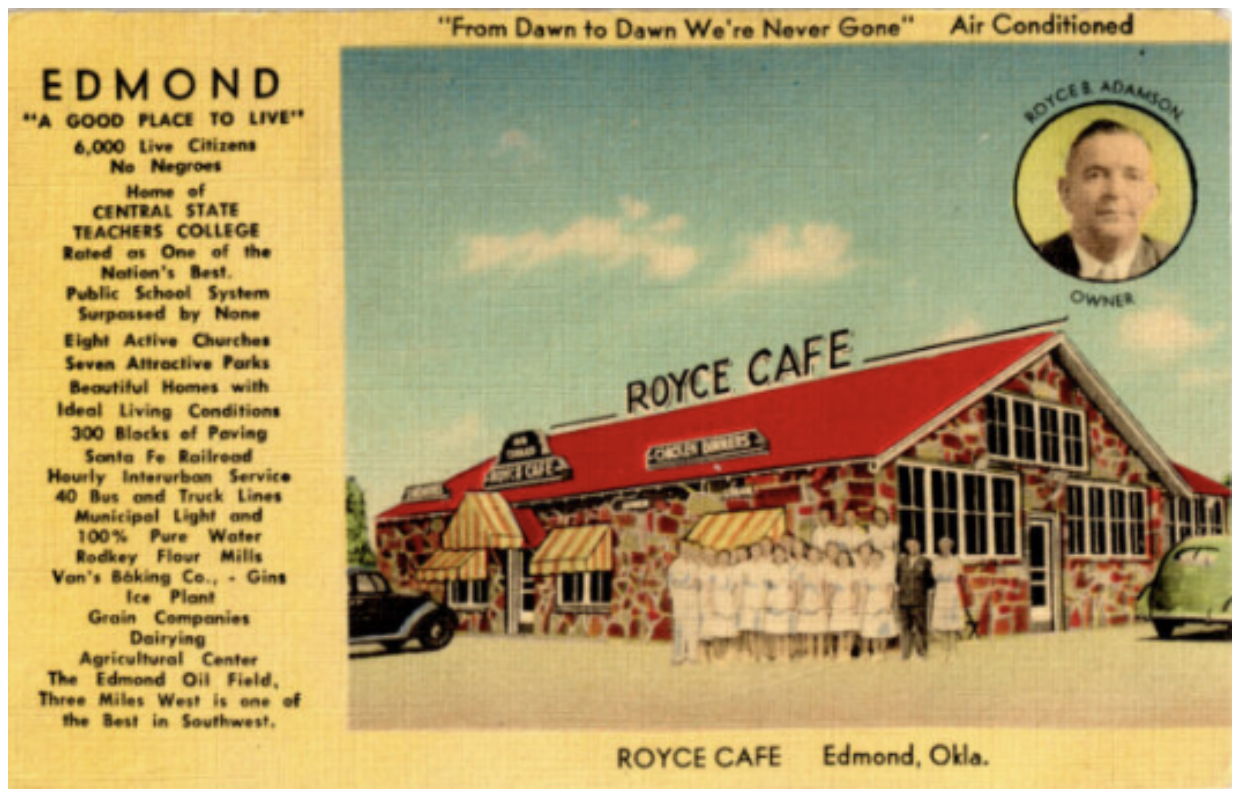


Figure 11: “This page is part of the Newcomer’s Guide to Edmond, which would have been given to new Edmond residents. Among numerous letters from Edmond businesses and even the Mayor, this page of statistics lists the population of Edmond in 1946 as “7,500 (estimated), 100% White. No Negroes.”” <https://www.edmondhistory.org/promoting-edmond-as-100-white/>

MISCELLANEOUS FACTS AND FIGURES

Altitude—1200 feet above sea level. Edmond is the highest point on the Santa Fe Railroad between Kansas City and the Gulf of Mexico.

Amusements—Two movie theatres, with a total seating capacity of 800. Finest amusement park and zoo in Oklahoma is located only 8 miles from Edmond.

Banks—Two nationals, with total deposits of \$5,071,706.55 and total resources of \$5,284,207.29 as of December 31, 1946.

Churches—Eleven.

Edmond Bonded Debt—\$254,000. Water and sewer enlargement, Bond issue.

City Government—Managerial with Mayor and four councilmen. Elected every two years.

City Valuation—\$7,000,000.00.

City Tax Rate—Only sinking fund for bonds is levied.

Newspapers—Four weeklies.

Parks—Five with a total of 110 acres. Two tennis courts. One large swimming pool.

Police Protection—Edmond Police Department has four men, two police cars.

Population—City of Edmond:

1920	2452	
1930	3576	
1940	4002	
1946	7500	Estimated

100% White. No negroes.

Post Office—Serves Edmond and a 200 square mile rural area. Sixteen employees. Eight mail trains a day give rapid regular mail and air-mail service to all points.

Retail Outlets—230 stores and business firms.

Figure 12: Dr. A.L. Dowell and His Son, 1965. Oklahoma Historical Society.



Dr. A.L. Dowell and His Son, 1965

Dr. Dowell and his son Robert following their successful court case to end segregation in Oklahoma City Public schools.

Photo Courtesy of the Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection from the Oklahoma Historical Society.

Figure 13: Edmond History Museum, "Integrating Edmond."
<https://www.edmondhistory.org/integrating-edmond/>

Suggested projects for the chapter were listed by Edmond organizer Speck Reynolds, public information officer at Langston University. Reynolds suggested that the Edmond chapter work toward:

ONE — The employment of 40 black professors and instructors at Central State College;

TWO — An investigation by the state NAACP of employment practices at the college;

THREE — The employment of 10 black teachers in Edmond public schools;

FOUR— Negro history courses in the public schools;

FIVE — Integrated employment of the city's police and fire departments and city hall crews;

SIX — Jobs for black sales people in Edmond retail stores, and

SEVEN — The funding of 20 YMCA memberships for underprivileged Negro children.

Reynolds said these were "not demands nor a manifesto, but merely suggestions for correcting injustices in the Edmond community."

A list of goals put forth by the burgeoning Edmond NAACP as reported in the May 10th, 1969 edition of *The Oklahoman*.

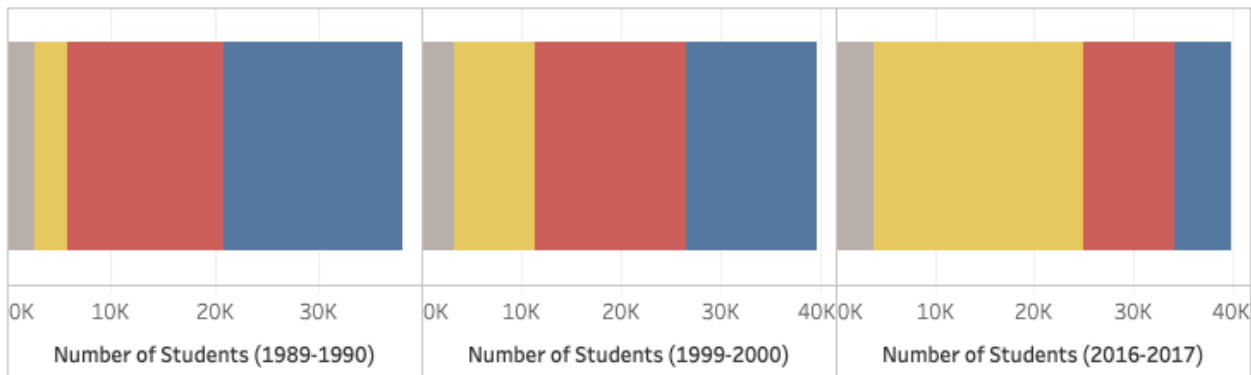
Figure 14: “The racial and economic divide widened amid a dramatic shift in enrollment patterns. Across U.S. public schools from 1968 to 2011, enrollment among white students dropped 28 percent, but grew by 19 percent among black students and 495 percent for Hispanics.”

Jennifer Palmer and Whitney Bryen. “Then and Now: Brown v. Board’s Legacy in Oklahoma City Schools.” *Oklahoma Watch*. May 17, 2019.

<https://oklahomawatch.org/2019/05/17/then-and-now-brown-v-boards-legacy-in-oklahoma-city-schools/>

Oklahoma City Schools Since Desegregation

After the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1954 that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional, Oklahoma City Public Schools gradually became more integrated. But white flight also began and continued for decades.

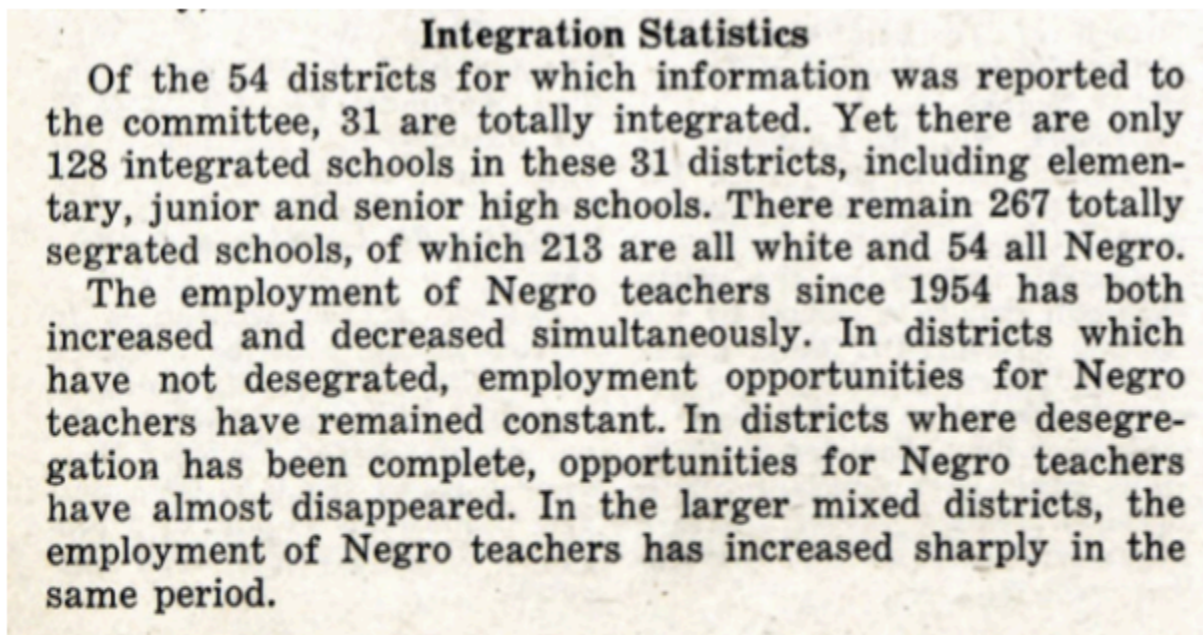


Source: National Center for Education Statistics.

- Race
- White
 - Black
 - Hispanic
 - Other

Figure 15: Edmond History Museum, "White Flight Fuels The Growth of Edmond."

<https://www.edmondhistory.org/white-flight-fuels-the-growth-of-edmond/>



Excerpt from an article in the July 4th, 1963 edition of *The Vista* discussing the state of integration in Oklahoma.

The data comes from a government report entitled, "The Extent and Pattern of Segregation in Oklahoma's Public Schools."

Figure 16: Lindsey Nicole Henry Vouchers provided by Oklahoma State Education Department.

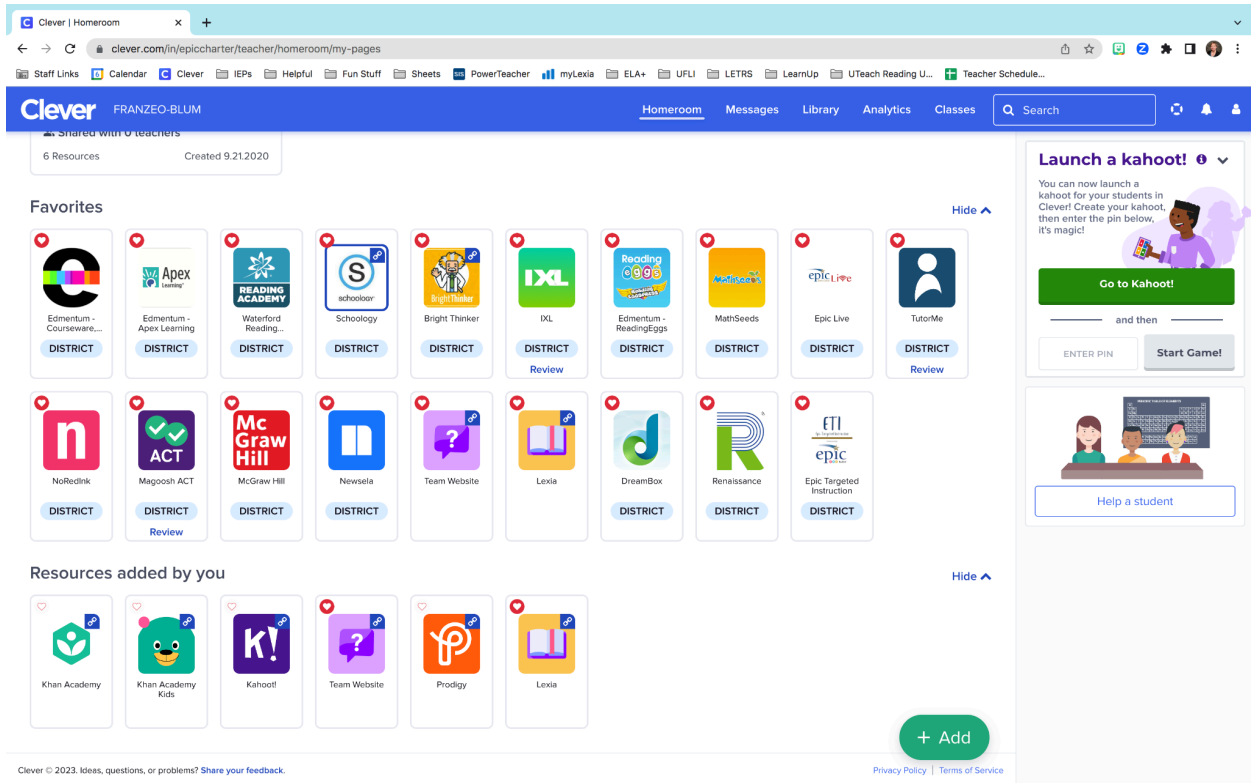
**Public Dollars to Private Schools:
The Growth of Lindsey Nicole Henry Vouchers**

School Year	Total Recipients	Total Scholarships
2010-11	53	-
2011-12	144	\$941,276
2012-13	211	\$1,318,903
2013-14	276	\$1,872,806
2014-15	364	\$2,439,059
2015-16	455	\$3,586,394
2016-17	673	\$3,660,655
2017-18	714	\$4,445,444
2018-19	826	\$5,790,995
2019-20	1,001	\$6,914,159
2020-2021	1,135*	\$7,347,598
2021-2022	1,410*	\$9,145,901
Total		\$47,463,190

Source: State Education Department

*Number of applicants

Figure 17: Oklahoma Teacher’s Dashboard of data programs and standardized curriculum programs that have to be purchased by district licenses each school year.



https://clever.com/oauth/authorize?channel=clever&client_id=4c63c1cf623dce82caac&confirm_d=true&district_id=520a6793a9dd788a46000fdc&redirect_uri=https%3A%2F%2Fclever.com%2F%2Fin%2Fauth_callback&response_type=code&state=556dba9a119a1ab1c0d5483a2f218bc42eac452145d214e5586c32bf2db28f3c: (Authorized Clever Login Only.)

Figure 18: The Oklahoma State Testing Practice test for 3rd grade ELA (English Language Arts). This is an open response question where the 3rd grade student must analyze two comparative reading passages (seen on tab 1 and tab 2) while typing in their answer into the answer box. This is an example of a developmentally inappropriate state task for a 3rd grade student. <https://okpracticetest.cognia.org/student/testcontent>; Question #10

Question 10

Screen Zoom: [magnifying glass icon]

Text-to-Speech: [play icon]

Tab 1

Tab 2

Describe how the author structures paragraphs 4 and 5 of "The American Buffalo." Provide details from the passage to support your answer.

Windows: Copy (ctrl + c), Paste (ctrl + v)
Mac: Copy (command + c), Paste (command + v)

Maximum number of words: 800 | Words: 0

"The American Buffalo." Copyright© 2022 by Cognia, Inc.

Clear Pause

Figure 19: A map of school closures and relocations for Oklahoma City in 2019. It is a visual example of privatization in urban school districts and communities. Please note that all three schools that are recognized for relocation are all charter schools. Also please note that after relocation Seeworth South is no longer in operation in 2023.

https://tulsaworld.com/news/state-and-regional/oklahoma-city-district-chief-recommends-school-closure-plan/article_fbbdc640-3d83-5bc9-9e6b-f3101d1d7230.html

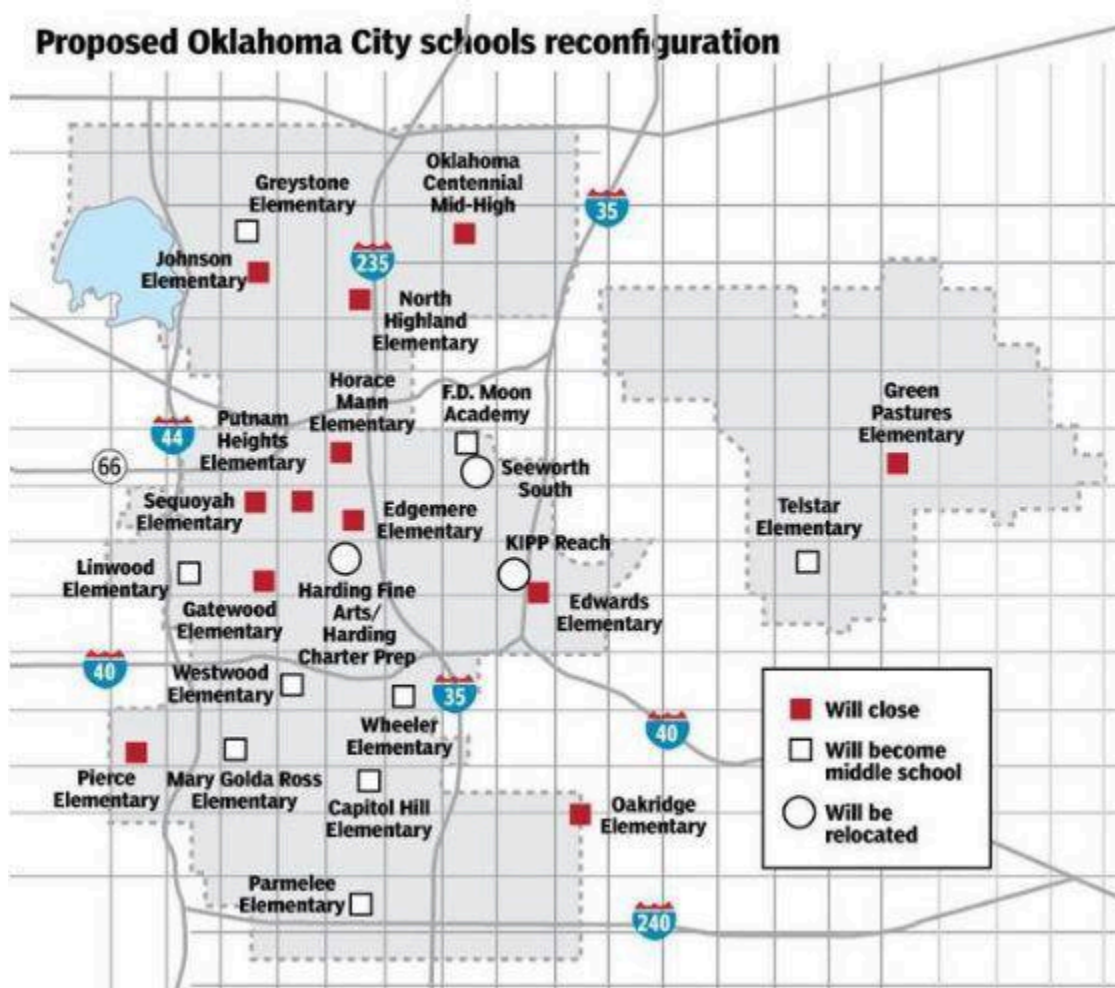


Figure 20: This table from the LETRS teacher training manual shows how the gap of vocabulary and word knowledge will continue to increase in the early grades affecting reading fluency and comprehension. This gap is significant when looking at students in ethnic minority communities and in lower socioeconomic categories.

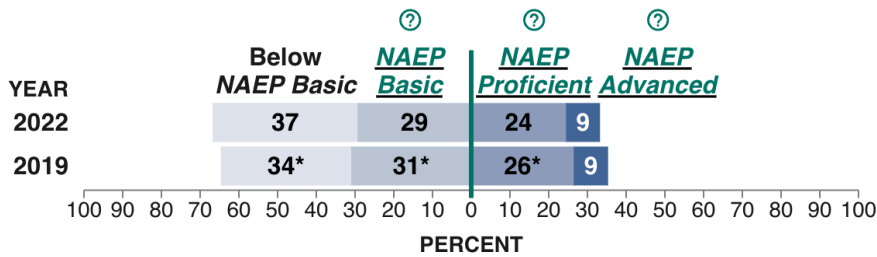
Table 5.2: How the Gap in Word Knowledge Grows
 (After Biemiller, 1999, 2005)

Grade	Root Words Known by Average Student (25–75th Percentile)	Root Words Known by Lowest 25% Students (Bottom Quartile)
End of pre-K	3,440	2,440
End of kindergarten	4,300	3,016
End of grade 1	5,160	3,592
End of grade 2	6,020	4,168

Table also on page 9 of the LETRS manual.

Figure 21: From the NAEP national scores in fourth grade reading; comparing 2019 and the decrease of proficient scores in 2022. This also shows the ‘below basic’ category now being the highest percentage of students in the U.S. The Nation’s Report Card. “NAEP Report Card: 2022 NAEP Reading Assessment,” Accessed: July 10, 2023, <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/highlights/reading/2022/>.

FIGURE | Trend in fourth-grade NAEP reading achievement-level results



* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2022.

NOTE: NAEP achievement levels are to be used on a trial basis and should be interpreted and used with caution.

Figure 22: Oklahoma 2022 Reading assessment scores compared to the National NAEP Scores.

The Nation’s Report Card. “NAEP Report Card: 2022 Reading State Snapshot Report - Oklahoma - Grade 4,” Accessed: July 10, 2023, <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/stt2022/pdf/20230100K4.pdf>.

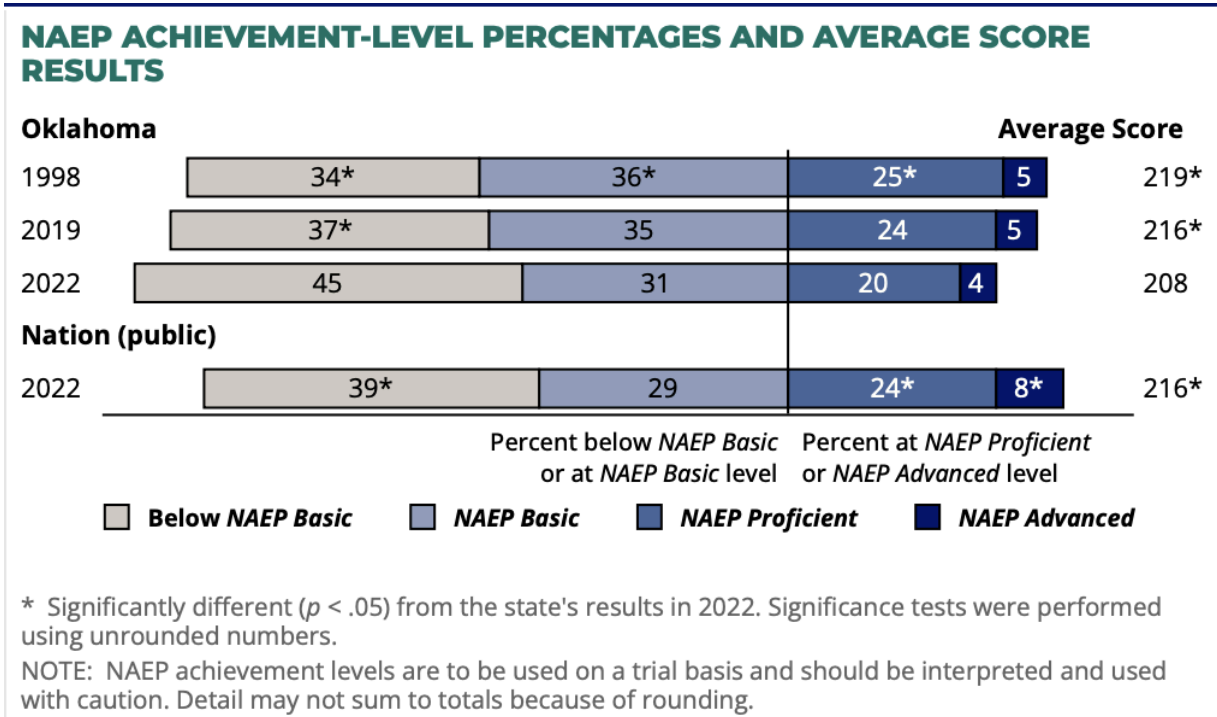


Figure 23: Breakdown of Oklahoma Student Achievement in 2022, based on Ethnicity.

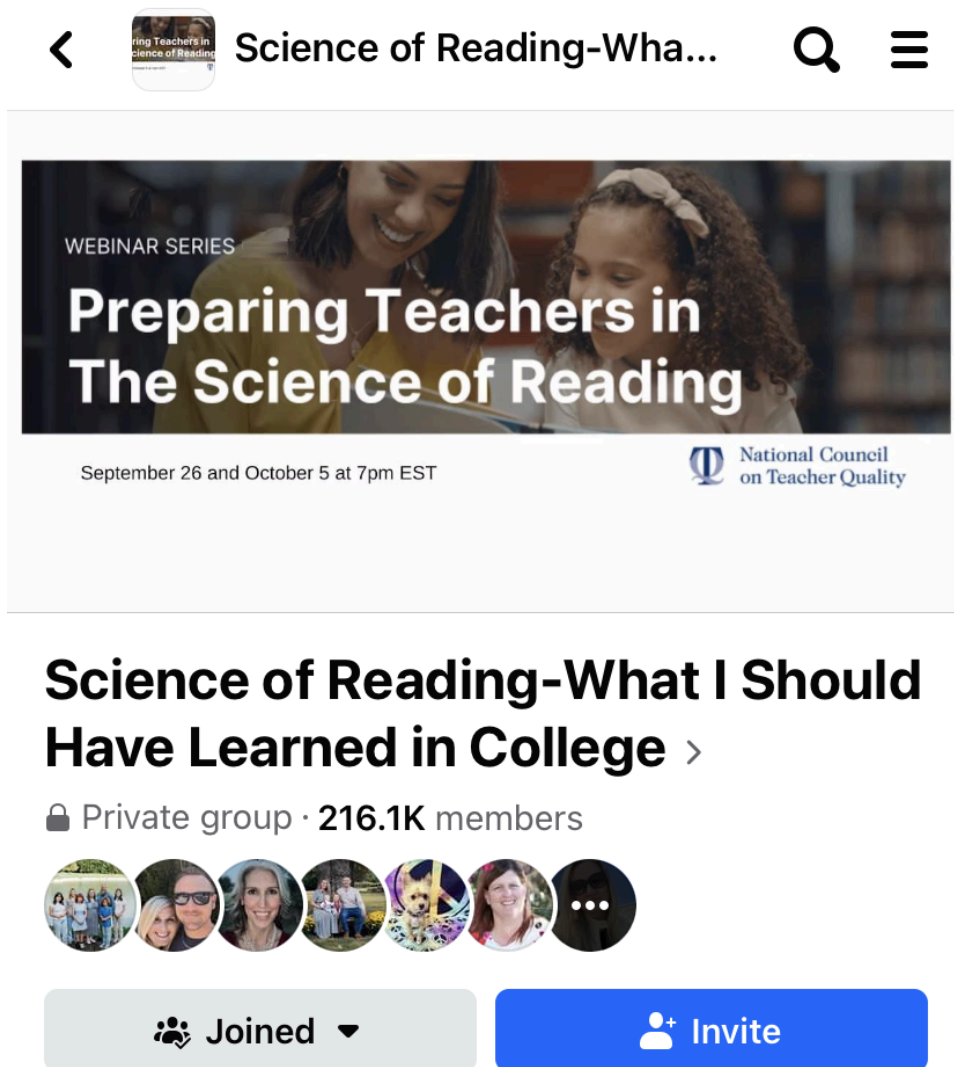
RESULTS FOR STUDENT GROUPS IN 2022

REPORTING GROUPS	PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS	AVG. SCORE	PERCENTAGE AT OR ABOVE NAEP		PERCENTAGE AT NAEP ADVANCED
			BASIC	PROFICIENT	
Race/Ethnicity					
White	46	215	63	29	5
Black	8	193	39	11	1
Hispanic	20	195	40	14	1
Asian	2	‡	‡	‡	‡
American Indian/Alaska Native	13	205	53	22	4
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1	‡	‡	‡	‡
Two or More Races	11	213	60	32	6
Gender					
Male	51	203	49	21	3
Female	49	214	62	27	4
National School Lunch Program					
Eligible	65	201	47	17	2
Not eligible	35	222	70	37	7

‡ Reporting standards not met.

NOTE: Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding, and because the "Information not available" category for the National School Lunch Program, which provides free/reduced-price lunches, is not displayed. Black includes African American and Hispanic includes Latino. Race categories exclude Hispanic origin.

Figure 24: Social Media groups such as this Facebook group, “Science of Reading-What I Should Have Learned in College,” boasts over two hundred and sixteen thousand members. This is in response to the lack of SOR education in teacher college and university programs and teachers feeling ill prepared to systematically teach phonics and reading literacy inside the classroom.



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<https://www.edmondhistory.org/white-flight-fuels-the-growth-of-edmond/#:~:text=As%20a%20result%2C%20thousands%20of,as%20an%20all%2Dwhite%20town.>

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