

# FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS, SEGREGATION THEN, SEGREGATION SINCE

## Education and the Unfinished March

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Fifty years ago last January, George C. Wallace took the oath of office as governor of Alabama, pledging to defy the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision prohibiting separate public schools for black students. "I draw the line in the dust," Wallace shouted, "and toss the gauntlet before the feet of tyranny, and I say segregation now, segregation tomorrow, and segregation forever" (Wallace 1963).

Eight months later, at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, Martin Luther King Jr. set forth a different vision for American education. "I have a dream," King proclaimed, that "one day right down in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers."

Wallace later recanted, saying, "I was wrong. Those days are over, and they ought to be over" (Windham 2012).

They ought to be over, but Wallace's 1963 call for a line in the dust seems to have been more prescient than King's vision. Racial isolation of African American children in separate schools located in separate neighborhoods has become a permanent feature of our landscape. Today, African American students are more isolated than they were 40 years ago, while most education policymakers and reformers have abandoned integration as a cause.

In place of integration, politicians, commentators, and public education critics, content with situating black students in racially homogenous schools,<sup>1</sup> declare

instead that the test score gap between black and white students is the "civil rights issue of our time."<sup>2</sup>

Although this gap is real, it has been declining for decades, while a host of factors besides schools influence student performance. The marchers did not need to be told what a half century of subsequent social science research has confirmed—schools cannot fulfill their potential so long as African Americans are segregated, as King put it, into "a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity."

Today, many black children still attend schools in racially and economically isolated neighborhoods, while their families still reside in lonely islands of poverty: 39 percent of black children are from families with incomes below the poverty line, compared with 12 percent of white children (U.S. Census Bureau(a)); 28 percent of black children live in high-poverty neighborhoods, compared with 4 percent of white children (Casey 2013).<sup>3</sup>

Other socioeconomic hardships that powerfully affect student achievement also remain unacceptable for black students: Housing for many remains inadequate (Sherman 2006); the black unemployment rate remains today, as then, more than twice that for whites (Austin 2013). While the minimum wage has been extended to some occupations in which black workers predominate, its level today is below that established in 1967, inflation-adjusted and in relation to national average wages (Mishel 2013). A discriminatory criminal justice system today incarcerates many more black young adults than it did 50 years ago (Alexander 2010).<sup>4</sup>

This is part of a series of reports from the Economic Policy Institute outlining the steps we need to take as a nation to fully achieve each of the goals of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Visit [www.unfinishedmarch.com](http://www.unfinishedmarch.com) for updates and to join the **Unfinished March**.

Freeing African Americans from these lonely and segregated islands was the aspiration of the 1963 March on Washington. Yet with the march's demands for school integration and economic justice still unfulfilled, how did test scores become *the* civil rights issue of our time?

## The diversion from integration toward compensatory education

The march's leaders hoped that their mobilization would pressure Congress to pass the Civil Rights Act, which had been drafted by President Kennedy's Justice Department and was languishing in Congress.<sup>5</sup> Regarding education, the bill called only for more aggressive efforts to prosecute Southern refusals to dismantle formally segregated school systems.

One provision required the Office of Education<sup>6</sup> to investigate school districts that failed to integrate. As the bill neared passage in 1964, Johnson administration negotiators agreed to dilute this requirement to lessen Southern opposition to the bill as a whole. Instead of investigations, the act called for a "survey...concerning the lack of availability of equal educational opportunities for individuals by reason of race," with results to be reported within two years.<sup>7</sup>

Initially, the Office of Education planned simply to ask its regional attorneys to report instances of continuing resistance to desegregation. But Commissioner of Education Francis Keppel decided to expand the project and commissioned one of the nation's leading sociologists, James S. Coleman, to use the best statistical tools then available to survey a representative national sample of 600,000 elementary and secondary school students. The survey covered student attitudes and family social and economic circumstances; it also included math and reading test items.

Until Coleman's study, the only nationally representative student achievement data had come from Project

Talent, a 1960 Office of Education survey of high school students' abilities and interests, intended to help guidance counselors advise students in choosing careers. It included cognitive test items and showed that the average black student's score was lower than scores of about 95 percent of all white students, a staggering gap that attracted almost no specific attention.<sup>8</sup> Coleman found the gap to be somewhat smaller—the average black student's literacy and mathematics proficiency was worse than that of about 85 percent of whites.<sup>9</sup>

Measuring the gap, however, was not an important concern. Rather, Keppel and Coleman expected the addition of a statistically sophisticated methodology to reinforce their regional offices' attorney reports: that foot-dragging on desegregation had left black children with poorer facilities, larger classes, and less adequate teachers, and that this resource discrimination was associated with poorer academic performance. As Coleman himself predicted before completing the survey:

...the study will show the difference in the equality of schools that the average Negro child and the average white child are exposed to....[T]he difference is going to be striking. And even though everybody knows there is a lot of difference between suburban and inner-city schools, once the statistics are there in black and white, they will have a lot more impact.

Although the data did confirm this difference, it was not "striking"; the association between resource differences and a racial achievement gap was surprisingly small. Rather, to Coleman's surprise, this association was statistically overwhelmed by another, that between family characteristics—such as parent educational level—and student achievement. Lowered class sizes or other resource improvements in schools serving large numbers of black children made little difference.



What did make a difference was integration, but only where black children were integrated into majority middle-class schools. In other words, priorities of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom had been correct: To improve black student achievement, the nation must improve socioeconomic conditions for black families, as well as implement integration not only by race but by social class.

Yet rather than connect the Coleman Report to the civil rights movement's demands for integration, federal officials and their liberal allies undertook a shameful effort in 1966 to hide Coleman's findings and even to misrepresent them, setting a tone for denunciations of public education, and rhetoric about school reform, that continues to our time.

Worried that a report minimizing the importance of school resources would reinforce conservative opposition to the new federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (intended to provide supplementary funds for schools serving disadvantaged students), Johnson administration officials initially suppressed Coleman's report. Instead, the Office of Education (Harold Howe had succeeded Francis Keppel as commissioner) released only a summary downplaying the main finding about the importance of family characteristics and social class integration and exaggerating the minor finding that school resource differences were associated—barely—with an achievement gap. The report itself was released weeks later, after headlines distorting its message had sunk in and political support had coalesced around federal funds for schools serving black students. This “compensatory education,” not integration, became the chief weapon in the nation's arsenal to combat inequality. School reformers' claim today that improving teacher quality will equalize achievement, in the absence of addressing the poverty of many black children or their isolation from middle-class society, is a direct descendant of the Johnson administration's short-sighted efforts to build support

for compensatory education by exaggerating the importance of school resources alone.

The fear of education reformers today, that discussion of social and economic impediments to learning will only lead to “making excuses” for poor teaching (Rothstein 2008), mirrors fears in 1966 that similar discussion would undermine support for federal aid to education.

A year earlier, Daniel Patrick Moynihan had written a controversial report suggesting that low-income African Americans' isolation in urban ghettos, without access to jobs and the mainstream economy, had undermined the family characteristics needed to take advantage of opportunities for integration, were such opportunities ever to arise. Moynihan's 1965 brief remains controversial because it is too easily and mistakenly interpreted as blaming black families themselves for their continued poverty. But by stressing the importance of families' ability to support children's success, Moynihan had anticipated Coleman's findings, and was dismayed at how the administration ignored its implications. He denounced as “gilding the ghetto” the administration's strategy of pouring resources into black central city neighborhoods with housing (“Model Cities”), antipoverty, and compensatory education funds, rather than fighting *as well* to promote black families' movement into white middle-class suburbs where job opportunities existed. He (temporarily) abandoned the Democratic Party for the Nixon administration, which seemed committed to pursuing the Coleman Report's implied recommendations.

At first, the Nixon administration adopted Moynihan's strategy, and Secretary of Housing and Urban Development George Romney began to withhold federal funds from white suburbs that refused subsidized lower-middle-income housing and low-income public housing for black families moving from central cities.<sup>10</sup> His strategy divided Nixon's advisors. Some (Vice President Spiro Agnew was one) supported sub-

urban desegregation as necessary to avoid further rioting in black ghettos. Some supported desegregation, hoping that African American dispersion in suburbs would weaken urban Democratic political machines while posing no threat to Republican suburban control. But other advisors, such as Kevin Phillips, architect of Nixon's suburban political strategy, feared that opposition of white voters to integration would threaten Republican support in those suburbs. This viewpoint prevailed, and Nixon announced, "[I]t is not the policy of this government to use the power of the federal government or federal funds in...ways not required by the law for forced integration of the suburbs. I believe that forced integration of the suburbs is not in the national interest" (Nixon 1970). The nation's brief experiment with suburban desegregation ended.

Once the ghetto became politically acceptable, busing was the only remaining tool to desegregate schools. The Nixon administration quietly promoted busing while publicly blaming "activist" judges for the ensuing turmoil. Soon, Nixon's judicial appointees ended busing as well. Compensatory education became the only approach for raising black achievement. Accepting defeat, Moynihan returned to the Democratic Party, serving as New York senator from 1977 to 2001, but still skeptical of ghetto amelioration as a substitute for desegregation. Attempts to raise achievement solely by improving ghetto schools continue to date, with disappointing results. It remains the strategy of contemporary reformers, and its continued failure leads, inevitably, to conclusions that public education itself has failed and must be dismantled.

## **Achievement gains by blacks as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)**

As commissioner of education, Francis Keppel made another contribution of lasting importance. When the

Office of Education was created in 1867, Congress had instructed the commissioner to collect "such statistics and facts as shall show the condition and progress of education in the several States and Territories." The requirement was ignored until, in late 1963, shortly after the March on Washington but before knowing that the 1964 Civil Rights Act would require the Coleman survey, Keppel asked John Gardner, then president of the Carnegie Foundation, to form a committee to design a measuring system for student outcomes.

The committee labored for a decade to produce the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a survey including test items in math, reading, science, social studies, foreign language, and writing, but also covering "less tangible areas" such as art, music, citizenship, career and occupational development, and health and physical fitness (including such aspects of emotional health as self-image and self-confidence). Survey items assessed personal economic skills such as budgeting and ability to reject misleading advertising.<sup>11</sup>

NAEP was designed for a nationally representative student sample. To cover many curricular areas in a limited time for each participant, different test booklets were administered to different students, with results aggregated into national results. For the less tangible items that could not be assessed with a paper-and-pencil test, NAEP planned to have surveyors interview students about attitudes and make judgments about their abilities.

Gardner's committee also wanted to avoid judging school performance only on what students remembered shortly after being drilled. More important was what young adults retained, so the early NAEP included a sample of young adults, visited at home and assessed in the same subjects as students.

NAEP began in the early 1970s as the committee had designed. Samples generated statistically reliable res-

ults by community type (large city, suburb, small city, or rural town), gender, parental education, and poverty status. Race was added shortly afterwards. But NAEP was very expensive; as Congress cut funds, observations and interviews were eliminated, less tangible items were dropped, and NAEP became primarily an in-school paper-and-pencil test of basic math and reading skills.<sup>12</sup>

The sampling design mostly survived, so NAEP still today can assess a broader swath of the curriculum, even in basic subjects, than tests in which all students get identical items. Because only a sample of students participate, no school- or student-level results are generated, and teachers have no incentive to prepare students for specific questions or themes. NAEP remains today the most reliable student achievement indicator, often called testing's "gold standard" by participants on all sides of education debates.

NAEP introduced a second assessment in 1990 that incorporates more questions requiring reasoning and "constructed" (i.e., not multiple choice) responses. The Department of Education calls the original design the "Long Term Trend," or "LTT," and the newer design the "Main NAEP."<sup>13</sup>

We now have trend data in basic skills since 1971 and in somewhat more advanced skills since 1990, by race. Eight available trends include LTT's more basic skills and Main NAEP's somewhat more advanced skills, for math and reading, and for fourth- and eighth-graders. LTT trends by race begin in 1973 for math and in 1971 for reading, with the most recent data for 2012. Main NAEP trends by race begin in 1990 for math and in 1992 for reading, with the most recent data for 2011.<sup>14</sup>

Early on, NAEP confirmed what we knew from Project Talent and from the Coleman Report: Average black achievement was below that of about four-fifths of white students. In 1992, the earliest year for which we have math and reading data from the Main NAEP

that included constructed response items, black student achievement was similarly below that of whites.<sup>15</sup>

From NAEP's inception, black students have made very large gains—about a full standard deviation on the LTT from the early 1970s to 2012 and about two-thirds as much on the Main NAEP from the early 1990s to 2011.<sup>16</sup>

On some components, gains have been greater and in others, less. African Americans have generally made greater gains in math than in reading and in fourth than in eighth grade. In fourth-grade math, average black students now score better than average white students scored in 1973 on the LTT, and better than average white students scored in 1990 on the Main NAEP. This full standard deviation gain in a single generation represents an improvement rate rarely encountered in any area of human performance.

In eighth-grade math, black students' gains have been nearly as large. Average black eighth-graders now score better than about 40 percent of whites in 1973 on the LTT and in 1990 on the Main NAEP.

In reading, black fourth-graders gained a full standard deviation and black eighth-graders gained slightly less than that since 1971 on the LTT. This is also a very large gain. On the Main NAEP, black fourth- and eighth-graders gained about a third of a standard deviation since 1992, an impressive but not spectacular rate of progress.

**Table 1** displays average annual rates of black NAEP improvement, in math and reading, fourth and eighth grades, combined, in six periods, as well as for the full time span for which NAEP data are available:

- 1970s, beginning when math and reading LTT data became available in 1973
- 1980s and early 1990s, before math and reading Main NAEP data became available in 1992

TABLE 1

**Average annual growth of black students' NAEP scale scores, selected periods, fourth and eighth grades, math and reading combined**

	LTT	Main NAEP	Average
<b>1973–1980</b>	0.6%		0.6%
<b>1980–1992</b>	0.3%		0.3%
<b>1992–2000</b>	0.2%	0.4%	0.3%
<b>2000–2003</b>	0.8%	1.1%	0.9%
<b>2003–2011/12</b>	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%
<b>1973–2012</b>	0.4%		
<b>1992–2011</b>		0.5%	

**Note:** For details, see Appendix Table 1, available at the end of this publication's Web page, <http://www.epi.org/publication/unfinished-march-public-school-segregation>

**Source:** Author's calculations from NAEP Data Explorer and, for data prior to 1978, Campbell et al. (1996), Figures 4.1, 4.2, 7.1, and 7.2

- the balance of the 1990s
- early 2000s, before implementation of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law in 2003
- subsequent years for which LTT data are available, ending with 2012, and for which Main NAEP data are available, ending with 2011

Table 1 shows uneven progress. LTT gains for African American students were considerable in the 1970s, slowed in the 1980s and more so in the 1990s, then resumed rapid growth in the early 2000s, only to slow in the later 2000s. Main NAEP scores for African American students rose slowly in the 1990s, very rapidly from 2000 to 2003, then slowly after 2003. Both tests show similarly slow growth in the 1990s with pickup in the early 2000s and then slowing in the later 2000s, giving confidence in the data's reliability.

The most rapid growth period was the early 2000s on the Main NAEP. That black student progress slowed after 2003 on both the LTT and Main NAEP, but slowed relatively more on the more cognitively chal-

lenging Main NAEP than on the basic-skills-focused LTT, is consistent with but does not prove a story that excessive basic-skills focus at the expense of reasoning began with the 2003 implementation of No Child Left Behind. Further, the slowing on growth of both tests is consistent with, but does not prove a story that NCLB created incentives for instructional practices (perhaps excessive test preparation and drill) that were less effective than practices employed prior to the law's implementation.

Although black student improvement has been impressive, policymakers are shockingly incurious about its causes. Some public education critics, although claiming to base policy on research, simply deny the improvement itself.<sup>17</sup> Instead, they stress relatively slow improvement in the gap between white and black scores.<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, the average black student still performs more poorly than about three-quarters of all whites. While black achievement has been improving, so has white

TABLE 2

**Average annual change in black–white test score gap, selected periods, fourth and eighth grades, math and reading combined**

	LTT	Main NAEP	Average
<b>1973–1980</b>	-2.6%		-2.6%
<b>1980–1992</b>	-0.9%		-0.9%
<b>1992–2000</b>	0.2%	-0.5%	-0.1%
<b>2000–2003</b>	-3.5%	-2.6%	-3.0%
<b>2003–2011/12</b>	-0.9%	-1.6%	-1.2%
<b>1973–2012</b>	-1.2%		
<b>1992–2011</b>		-0.9%	

**Note:** For details, see Appendix Table 1, available at the end of this publication's Web page, <http://www.epi.org/publication/unfinished-march-public-school-segregation>

**Source:** Author's calculations from NAEP Data Explorer and, for data prior to 1978, Campbell et al. (1996), Figures 4.1, 4.2, 7.1, and 7.2

achievement. The gap has narrowed slightly because white gains have been smaller.

**Table 2** compares rates at which the gap narrowed during the periods displayed in Table 1. The table shows the gap narrowing most rapidly in the 1970s and early 2000s. During these periods, black achievement improved more rapidly than white achievement, although both improved. In the 1980s, 1990s, and late 2000s, the gap narrowed more slowly, because black and white improvement occurred at more similar rates.

## What are we to make of African American achievement gains?

It is hard to see how improvement for both whites and blacks can be deemed evidence of school failure, but by focusing on the gap rather than on real improvement, most policymakers draw such a conclusion. Examining the causes of the improvement might inspire policymakers to wonder what policies, if any, were responsible for the gains and then try to intensify them. Instead, by focusing almost exclusively on per-

sisting gaps, reformers develop a narrative of public education failure, unsupported by evidence.

Because of inattention to causes of black student improvement, we have little evidence regarding whether this improvement is at all attributable to school policy. Gains can result either from improvement in schools or from improvement in socioeconomic conditions that prepare children to take advantage of good instruction. The Coleman Report suggested that student background is more powerful in differentiating black and white achievement than school effects. It is possible, but only possible, that educational approaches not yet employed in 1965 could have a greater effect.

It is incontrovertible, however, that steady improvement in black students' performance is inconsistent with the conventional claims of reformers that teachers of disadvantaged students are poorly trained, have low expectations, and fail to exert their best efforts. Data cannot disprove this story, but they do not support it.



It is plausible that further curricular improvements would benefit both blacks and whites, the net result being a continued achievement gap attributable to differences in socioeconomic backgrounds. It would be difficult, perhaps unjustifiable, to develop new successful pedagogies and make them available to black but not white students. If schools improved, achievement of both black and white students could go up while achievement gaps persisted.

Commenting on the Coleman Report, Daniel Patrick Moynihan and a collaborator, Frederick Mosteller, suggested as much. Many had reacted to the Coleman Report simplistically, interpreting it to mean that “schools don’t make a difference.” On the contrary, Mosteller and Moynihan quipped, children don’t invent algebra on their own. Whether children learn algebra depends on school quality. Which groups of children, on average, learn algebra better than others reflects their background characteristics.<sup>19</sup> This framework may be helpful for understanding how black achievement could have improved so substantially, though with less impact on the black–white gap.

David Grissmer et al. (1994) disentangled some causes of narrowing achievement gaps in the 1970s and 1980s, when black gains were more rapid than those for whites. Grissmer concluded that about half the gap-narrowing in that period was associated with changes in black family characteristics, with two such changes particularly influential: Black schoolchildren had mothers with greater educational attainment in 1990 than they had a decade earlier, and these mothers had fewer children, perhaps enabling them to devote greater attention to each child, a known predictor of higher achievement.

But Grissmer could not identify conditions associated with the other half of the gap-narrowing. Perhaps class-size reduction or other school improvements played a role.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps integration was partly responsible: Black children in 1990 benefited from court-

ordered integration but when the policy was subsequently reversed, black achievement growth slowed.

Recent research may have identified another factor. Chay, Guryan, and Mazumder (2009) attribute narrowing of the black–white gap in the 1980s to superior health of black children in the South, born in years following 1963 when hospitals in that region were desegregated and African American children had access to better health care. The researchers take the declining mortality rate of African American infants in the South in this period as representative of overall improvement in health, and they find that this declining mortality was highly correlated with higher test scores when this cohort became teens. Cognitive improvements for these Southern children were sufficient to improve overall average black achievement nationwide.

Other research has demonstrated large benefits from court-ordered school integration, including, for blacks, reduced dropout rates (Guryan 2004; Johnson 2011); less incarceration (Johnson 2011); fewer homicide arrests and less homicide victimization (Weiner, Lutz, and Ludwig 2010); and higher adult earnings and less poverty for adults who had attended integrated schools (Johnson 2011).

In 2006, the Russell Sage Foundation convened a conference of scholars to examine causes of LTT achievement gap trends through 2004 (Magnuson and Waldfogel 2008). Participants were concerned about stagnation of black students’ scores in the 1990s and were not yet fully aware of renewed progress in the early 2000s. The conferees identified several influences that could explain increases (or stagnation) in black scores and narrowing (or stagnation) of the achievement gap. Among these were parents’ educational attainment, family literacy,<sup>21</sup> and single parenthood (Magnuson, Rosenbaum, and Waldfogel 2008); the quality of early childhood experiences that develop noncognitive skills (Grissmer and Eiseman 2008); popular culture (Ferguson 2008); school factors such as class size and

TABLE 3

**Poverty rates experienced by NAEP test-taking population, from birth to test-taking year, selected years**

Year of test	Average child poverty rate, 9 years (birth to fourth grade)		Ratio, black to white, 9-year child poverty experience	Average child poverty rate, 13 years (birth to eighth grade)		Ratio, black to white, 13-year child poverty experience
	White	Black		White	Black	
<b>1973</b>	11%	46%	4.1	13%	52%	4.0
<b>1980</b>	11%	41%	3.6	11%	41%	3.7
<b>1992</b>	15%	44%	2.9	15%	45%	2.9
<b>2000</b>	15%	39%	2.6	15%	41%	2.7
<b>2003</b>	14%	35%	2.5	15%	38%	2.6
<b>2011</b>	17%	39%	2.3	16%	37%	2.3

**Note:** Estimates for years when data are not available are interpolated from prior and successive years.

**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau(a)

teacher quality (Ladd 2008); and isolation of black students in segregated schools (Berends and Penaloza 2008; Vigdor and Ludwig 2008).

In other work, Grissmer et al. (2010) identified an additional predictor—the background knowledge that young children already possess when entering kindergarten. Children are better readers if they have out-of-school experiences that provide meaningful contexts for written words. Grissmer has not, however, identified whether black children’s growth in such experiences can explain changes in their average achievement.

## New challenges for research on sociodemographic factors

We have nearly a decade of data since the Russell Sage scholars examined the 2004 LTT. Breaking out predictors of these scores is beyond the scope of this discussion, but the following tables illustrate social and economic trends that may hold clues to black student

achievement trends and suggest policies for further improvement. The periods are those of previous tables.

Family poverty influencing student achievement is not poverty in the test year but poverty experienced throughout childhood, from birth to test year. Throughout childhood, changes in family income may result in changing access to health care, housing instability, stress from parental unemployment, or other conditions. **Table 3** shows average poverty rates for white and black children’s families for nine years prior to fourth-grade NAEP test administrations and for 13 years prior to eighth-grade administrations.

Family poverty of black students taking fourth- and eighth-grade NAEP tests declined steadily from 1973 to 2003, but then rose again (for fourth-graders) in 2011. This pattern supports but does not prove a theory that black achievement gains during this period may have been influenced by declines in childhood poverty. Earlier, we speculated that slowing improvement in black students’ achievement after 2003, especially on the Main NAEP, may have been influenced by excess-

TABLE 4

### High school graduation rate of women, age 25–29, in birth year of children taking NAEP tests, selected years

Year of test	Fourth-grade test takers			Eighth-grade test takers		
	White	Black	Ratio, black to white	White	Black	Ratio, black to white
1973	72%	48%	0.7	67%	39%	0.6
1980	78%	61%	0.8	75%	55%	0.7
1992	87%	80%	0.9	86%	75%	0.9
2000	87%	80%	0.9	87%	82%	0.9
2003	88%	85%	1.0	88%	82%	0.9
2011	88%	88%	1.0	90%	88%	1.0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau(b)

ive basic skills emphasis required by NCLB. Table 3 provides another possible explanation: increasing black family poverty after 2003.<sup>22</sup> These hypotheses are not mutually exclusive.

Table 3 also shows a steadily declining ratio of black to white poverty for NAEP test-takers from 1973 to 2011. This could help explain the period's steadily narrowing achievement gap.

Mothers' education may influence children's performance. Educated mothers use more complex language and vocabulary in speaking to and around children, may read to their children more and encourage children to read themselves, may use more supportive disciplinary approaches, and may feel more comfortable participating and collaborating with their children's teachers. **Table 4** shows shares of white and black women, 25 to 29, who were high school graduates in the birth year of NAEP test-takers from 1973 to 2011.

Because mothers' education probably trended similarly to that of all females in their cohort, the table shows that the share of black NAEP test takers with high school graduate mothers probably rose rapidly after 1973 and was nearly identical to the share for

whites by 2011. This is consistent with, but does not prove, a theory that black achievement gains during this period may have been influenced by improvements in the home intellectual environment for these students. The table also shows a narrowing black–white gap in female high school graduation rates. This is consistent with the period's narrowing black–white achievement gap.

**Table 5** shows the share of white and black women (also probably representative of white and black mothers), 25 to 29, who were college graduates in the birth year of NAEP test-takers in the illustrative years. The increase reinforces the notion that black NAEP test-takers from 1973 to 2011 experienced steadily improving home intellectual environments. But unlike for high school graduates, black women are still far from equal with whites in college graduation. These trends could but don't necessarily help explain black achievement gains and the narrowing but persistent achievement gap.

How much attention, guidance, and instruction parents can devote to their children depends partly on how many children must share in it. Although parents with

TABLE 5

**College graduation rate of women, age 25–29, in birth year of children taking NAEP tests, selected years**

Year of test	Fourth-grade test takers			Eighth-grade test takers		
	White	Black	Ratio, black to white	White	Black	Ratio, black to white
<b>1973</b>	10%	4%	0.4	9%	3%	0.4
<b>1980</b>	15%	7%	0.4	13%	6%	0.5
<b>1992</b>	21%	11%	0.5	22%	12%	0.6
<b>2000</b>	25%	11%	0.4	23%	11%	0.5
<b>2003</b>	25%	15%	0.6	24%	12%	0.5
<b>2011</b>	33%	18%	0.5	30%	17%	0.6

**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau(b)

fewer children may spend the additional time working rather than attending to their remaining children, it is nonetheless a conventional social science finding that children with fewer siblings have better cognitive performance. **Table 6** displays, for black and white NAEP test-takers, family size trends from birth to fourth and eighth grades.

For example, the table shows that for whites and blacks taking fourth-grade tests in 2011, average annual ratios in the nine years from 2002 to 2011 were, respectively, 0.98 and 0.75. These suggest that black children had the potential opportunity, prior to test taking, for three-quarters (0.77) the parental attention as whites.

Note, however, the large and rapid improvement in potential attention black parents could devote to individual children from 1973 to 1992, especially from 1973 to 1980. Although whites also had potential for greater attention during these periods, the increase for blacks was relatively greater. These data are also consistent with rapid improvement of black achievement in the 1970s and 1980s, in absolute terms and relative to white achievement, and the subsequent slowing of these gains.

We cannot say what the relative contributions were to changes in student achievement of changes in poverty rates, parental education, or family size, displayed in Tables 3–6, nor can we say what role school quality improvement played, because school quality indicators like class size and teacher quality are unavailable or difficult to quantify. For class size, data series are available for pupil–teacher ratio, and some analysts proxy this for class size but should not. Pupil–teacher ratios are affected by low ratios in special education, and spending on special education (mostly for teachers) has grown rapidly since 1973 (Alonso and Rothstein 2010). Declines in overall pupil–teacher ratios might not reflect class sizes experienced by regular white or black students. Although there are indicators purporting to measure teacher quality (years of education, experience, advanced degrees), there is little agreement regarding whether these measures reflect quality.

## Persistent segregation and the ‘truly disadvantaged’<sup>23</sup>

Out-of-school indicators described in the previous section are positive and, if trends continue, suggest likely



TABLE 6

**Parent-to-child ratio of NAEP test-taking population, from birth to test-taking year, selected years**

Year of test	Average parent-child ratio in families of fourth-grade test-taking population, birth to 9 years old		Black-white ratio	Average annual change in black-white ratio from previous period	Average parent-child ratio in families of eighth-grade test-taking population, birth to 13 years old		Black-white ratio	Average annual change in black-white ratio from previous period
	White	Black			White	Black		
<b>1973</b>	0.86	0.60	0.70		0.85	0.58	0.68	
<b>1980</b>	0.92	0.69	0.74	0.8%	0.90	0.65	0.73	0.9%
<b>1992</b>	1.00	0.76	0.77	0.2%	0.99	0.75	0.76	0.4%
<b>2000</b>	0.97	0.74	0.76	-0.1%	0.98	0.75	0.76	0.1%
<b>2003</b>	0.97	0.74	0.76	0.0%	0.98	0.74	0.76	-0.2%
<b>2011</b>	0.98	0.75	0.77	0.1%	0.97	0.75	0.77	0.2%

**Note:** Data for eighth-graders in 1973 are average from 1 year of age, not birth. Estimates for years when data are not available are interpolated from prior and successive years.

**Source:** Author's calculations based on Wething (2013)

continued improvement in black student achievement and perhaps a continued narrowing of the achievement gap. But there is one important negative trend: Isolation of black students, particularly of low-income black students, in predominantly black and low-income schools, is increasing. Indeed, the educational goal of the March on Washington—school desegregation—is a condition affecting black students in which we are sliding backwards.

Reflecting how little concern we now have about ongoing school segregation, data tracking it are rare. **Table 7** shows one indicator: the percentage of white students in a school that typical black students attend.

In 1970, black students typically attended schools where enrollment was 32 percent white. Integration increased in the 1970s; as suggested above, this may have supported rapid improvements in blacks' test scores during that decade. But integration declined in

the 1990s and settled at a lower level in the 2000s. As of 2010 black students typically attend schools that are only 29 percent white.

These averages understate critical reality. As more lower-middle-class and middle-class African Americans move to suburbs that are less segregated and/or less impoverished than central cities, low-income African Americans are more likely to attend heavily black and heavily low-income schools than before.

Improved black student achievement and narrowed black-white test score gaps are less impressive in our most segregated central cities than in the nation generally. Recently, NAEP began to report average scores for large urban districts; the findings show that low-income black students continue to achieve very poorly.

In 2011, the average nationwide black-white gap (Main NAEP) was 26 scale points (the average gap on

TABLE 7

### Exposure to white students for the typical black student in public schools, selected periods

School year	Percent of white students in typical black student's school
1970–1971	32.0%
1980–1981	36.2%
1991–1992	34.9%
2001–2002	30.7%
2006–2007	29.6%
2009–2010	29.2%

**Source:** Orfield, Kucsera, and Siegel-Hawley (2012), Table 5, for 1991–2010; Orfield (1983), Table 7, for 1970–1971 and 1980–1981

TABLE 8

### Difference between black students' average performance in selected districts and black students' national average performance, Main NAEP scale scores, 2011

	Difference
<i>Detroit</i>	-17
<i>Milwaukee</i>	-16
<i>Fresno, Calif.</i>	-15
<i>District of Columbia</i>	-14
<i>Cleveland</i>	-14

**Note:** For detailed breakdowns for all districts participating in the NAEP district assessment, see Appendix Tables 2a and 2b available at the end of this publication's Web page, <http://www.epi.org/publication/unfinished-march-public-school-segregation>

**Source:** NAEP Data Explorer

four tests: math and reading, fourth and eighth grades). This means that average black students performed better than only about 20 percent of whites. But scale score differences between black students nationwide and those in the most segregated cities were nearly as great as the black–white gap nationwide. **Table 8** displays average scale score differences between black students nationwide and those in five cities where differences are greatest.

Estimates from the performance differences shown in Table 8 indicate that average African American students in these cities perform below nearly two-thirds of African American students nationwide and below nearly all white students nationwide.

**Table 9**, for the same cities, displays for elementary students in 2000 (the most recent year for which data have been calculated) the exposure rate of white to black students and the share of students in typical black students' schools who come from economically dis-

TABLE 9

### Segregation and poverty in elementary school of a typical black student, selected central cities, 2000

	Percentage of white students in a typical black student's school	Percentage of economically disadvantaged students in a typical black student's school
<b>Detroit</b>	2%	85%
<b>Milwaukee</b>	13%	71%
<b>Fresno, Calif.</b>	19%	64%
<b>District of Columbia</b>	2%	72%
<b>Cleveland</b>	10%	88%
<b>U.S., nationwide</b>	31%	56%

**Note:** Data for U.S., nationwide are for 2001–2002. For detailed breakdowns for these and a wider set of school districts, see Appendix Table 3 available at the end of this publication's Web page, <http://www.epi.org/publication/unfinished-march-public-school-segregation>

**Source:** Data for districts are from USSchools; data for U.S., nationwide is from Orfield, Kucsera, and Siegel-Hawley (2012), Tables 5 and 8

advantaged families (defined as eligible for free or reduced-price lunch because family income is at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty line).

In some large districts, average scores for black students exceed those for black students nationwide, although they are still below those of white students within their districts. Of districts with available data, Charlotte-Mecklenberg, N.C., has the largest relative advantage; however, here only 54 percent of students in a typical black student's school are economically disadvantaged, less than in large central cities elsewhere, and 38 percent are white, more than in most large central cities elsewhere.<sup>24</sup>

With such concentrated disadvantage of African American students in cities displayed in Tables 8 and 9, it is difficult to imagine that achievement can improve substantially, or that differences between black students' performance in these districts and nationwide can be closed. It is also difficult to imagine how gaps between

black students in these cities and white students nationwide can be eliminated if we assume continued segregation of urban African American children.

From 2003 to 2011, average African American students nationwide gained an average of 7 scale points on the four Main NAEP tests. In the 10 large cities for which NAEP has data, black students gained an average of 9 points. Because many cities include relatively advantaged black populations as well as ghettos, this superior performance is hardly an endorsement of No Child Left Behind, intended to generate large improvements in the most disadvantaged children's performance. In one such city (New York) where reformers' policies—charter school expansion, closure of schools with low test scores, intensive test preparation—are applied with especial fanfare, black gains were the same (7 points) as gains nationwide.

The low achievement of children in racially isolated urban ghettos is, indeed, the civil rights issue of our

time, but it is unlikely to be meaningfully addressed by school reformers' policies.

## Should we focus on the achievement gap?

School reformers typically justify subordinating demands for economic and social equality to school policies aimed at narrowing the achievement gap by claiming that if black scores were higher, graduates would get better jobs, earn higher incomes, and could then afford to live in middle-class neighborhoods relatively free of crime, anti-social temptations for their children, and intrusive and aggressive policing. As New York's Mayor Michael Bloomberg once cavalierly put it, if schools improved, "a lot of what Dr. King wanted to accomplish in our society will take care of itself" (Wyatt 2002).

His claim was flawed for three reasons.

First, public education critics exaggerate the economic benefits of better achievement because they ignore how firms employ credentials for workforce sorting. Many good reasons exist for helping all children get better educations, but one is not that education itself can solve problems of poverty and inequality. Better-educated workers can be more productive, but they can also comprise a surplus of qualified job seekers, depressing wages. Already, many college graduates are employed part time, are forced to work as poorly paid interns rather than career-path professionals, or are working at jobs not requiring their skills (Rampall 2012).<sup>25</sup> This surplus can grow if reformers progress toward their objective of having all students "college-ready." If more educated workers grow in number faster than the economy and faster than the proportion of jobs requiring higher education, wages of these workers will fall. Education alone can be a ticket to the middle class only if proportional to the number of middle-class jobs available. School reformers fantasize that as more workers get more education, technology

will eliminate poorly paid jobs on which many workers now depend—driverless trucks will deliver goods to retail malls, fast food restaurants will be self-stocking, and new medical technology will permit the elderly and disabled to live independently. It is only a fantasy.

Improving blacks' education relative to whites would reduce blacks' disadvantage in competing for better jobs, but would not itself do much to increase the number of such jobs. The combination of more education and tepid economic growth could produce a new underclass of well-educated truck drivers, coffee baristas, and home health care aides. Equality requires not only enhancing African Americans' competitive position when competing with whites for limited opportunity, but also expanded opportunity with truly full employment for all workers—black and white—and improved labor standards. African Americans, no matter how well qualified, have never made rapid gains in periods of economic stagnation.

African Americans who complete high school still have 18 percent unemployment, twice the white rate. Even before the 2008 recession, unemployment for black college graduates was 50 percent higher than for whites; by 2011, over 8 percent of black college graduates remained unemployed, compared with 4.5 percent for whites (Mishel et al. 2012, Table 5.3).

Continued racial discrimination may partly explain this ongoing disparity.<sup>26</sup> It may also result from spatial mismatch—blacks are disadvantaged in competing for jobs located where historic housing discrimination has prevented them from residing. No doubt, the disparity may partly result from blacks having poorer achievement than whites with similar attainment.

Whatever the combination of reasons, school reformers hold out false hopes to many when they tell black students that *if only* they get more education, they will enjoy middle-class incomes with middle-



class security. They will certainly benefit from more education, but the “if only” misleads.

A second flaw in school reformers’ approach is their mostly backwards theory of cognitive development. True, children with better achievement are more likely to escape poverty, but even more so, better socioeconomic family conditions enable children to improve achievement. Children coming to school in poor health or with unstable housing are absent more frequently and cannot benefit from good instruction. Children who walk (or ride) to school through violent neighborhoods, or who return to these neighborhoods after school, are stressed and less able to focus on studies. Children with more frequently unemployed parents suffer from insecurity that affects learning.

These children cannot reasonably be expected to achieve, on average, like children without these disadvantages, no matter how high quality their instruction. Equality requires that the cycle of low achievement leading to poverty and poverty leading to low achievement be interrupted, but contrary to reformers’ assumptions, the latter direction is more susceptible to policy influence and a more powerful lever than the former.

And third, obsession with test score improvement undermines disadvantaged children’s opportunity for well-rounded education that public schools more typically deliver to middle-class children. The obsession is counterproductive because developing literary and quantitative proficiency requires balance between mechanical skill and background knowledge; holding educators accountable for the test scores in schools serving large numbers of disadvantaged children creates incentives to narrow curricula by directing time, effort, and resources away from non-tested curricular areas and toward more test preparation and drill in math and reading. This strategy ignores that literacy depends not only on decoding print but also on informed curiosity about history, literature, science,

and the arts. Mathematics proficiency also relies upon children’s having quantitative problems they are motivated to solve.

Graduates of both races need cultural literacy to compete in middle-class society and the workforce. Contemporary school reformers ignore this balance between basic skill and background knowledge, and exacerbate disadvantages of impoverished black youth.

## The march forward

For low-income African American children, continued improvement will most likely be accomplished by addressing the socioeconomic barriers the Coleman Report identified a half century ago; by providing high-quality early childhood care, staffed by well-educated professionals who can expose children to sophisticated intellectual environments like the ones typical middle-class children enjoy; and by providing high-quality after-school and summer programs in which children can acquire background knowledge and non-cognitive skills that predict high achievement. Other social and economic improvements could also help—stabilizing and improving low-income families’ housing opportunities, and ensuring that children can come to school in good physical and emotional health, able to be in regular attendance and to concentrate on lessons.

Whatever the shortcomings of public schools, damage to black children from the recent recession and its disparate impact on their families exceeds damage attributable to inadequacy of the schools that black children attend. Social and economic improvements necessary for African American educational success are conceivable only in reasonably stable communities and in reasonably secure families. While white adult unemployment has come down slowly from last year, the rate for blacks—still last hired and first fired—has remained virtually unchanged (BLS 2013). The toll on children’s achievement from racially disparate foreclosure rates,

rental evictions, loss of food security, loss of access to continuous health care, and other effects of poverty is palpable.

When low-performing students are concentrated in the same schools, it is more difficult to raise their achievement than when these children are integrated into the middle-class population. Where disadvantaged students are concentrated, frequent student mobility from inadequate housing and parental unemployment undermines instructional continuity, as classes are reconstituted and teachers repeat lessons for newcomers. When low-performing students are concentrated, teachers must slow the overall instructional pace rather than devote individual attention to students who struggle; schools must devote more time to discipline of students who are not engaged, taking time away from instruction while funds for academic support staff are diverted to disciplinary programs. Children learn less from each other if few come from homes where large vocabularies and more complex language are used and where they were often read to when young.

An investigation of Chicago school reform attempted to distinguish characteristics of schools where disadvantaged students improved and those where students stagnated. Schools with well-developed and aligned curricula, good teacher–principal collaboration, and concerted efforts to involve parents made greater progress. But such programs made little or no difference in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty, where nearly all students were black, residentially mobile, and had low-income parents with little formal education and little likelihood of employment. The investigators concluded, “Our findings about schooling in truly disadvantaged communities offer a sobering antidote to a heady political rhetoric arguing that all schools can be improved” (Bryk et al. 2010, 210).

Efforts to integrate such students into middle-class schools are impractical in many metropolitan areas. Busing distances are too great, and busing itself under-

mines the attachment to neighborhood schools that supports our democratic public education system and offers parents the opportunity and incentive to become involved in their children’s education.<sup>27</sup>

Schools in many urban ghettos are hypersegregated because their neighborhoods are racially isolated.<sup>28</sup> School administrators who aim to create more diversity typically establish magnet schools, make attendance zone boundary adjustments, or implement controlled-choice or socioeconomic school balancing. But such admirable efforts can succeed only at the margins. Too many “truly disadvantaged” students live too geographically distant from middle-class schools for such schemes to be practical, and too many of their parents are too stressed to make the proactive choices necessary (Rothstein and Santow 2012b).

In segregation from the mainstream, low-income black children differ from low-income non-blacks. Black children living in the poorest neighborhoods are most likely from families who lived in such neighborhoods in the prior generation. In contrast, living in the poorest neighborhoods for whites is most likely a single-generation phenomenon. The experience of living in one of the poorest neighborhoods for children whose parents were also raised in such neighborhoods is associated with a loss of about eight IQ points, compared with living in one of the poorest neighborhoods for only the present generation (Sharkey 2013).

Poor white and poor black families may improve their circumstances and leave high-poverty neighborhoods. But when poor white families move to better neighborhoods, their children benefit from better environments. When poor black families move to better neighborhoods, middle-class flight from these neighborhoods frequently ensues; the segregation (and poverty concentration) of the new neighborhoods increases, defeating these families’ mobility.

Education analysts frequently wonder why a black–white achievement gap remains, even when individual poverty and family characteristics are similar. Partly it’s because of greater (and multigenerational) segregation of black children into neighborhoods of high poverty, few employment opportunities, and frequent violence.

Neighborhood desegregation has disappeared from mainstream policy agendas partly because of beliefs that little can be done about it and that residential isolation has no constitutionally compelled remedy. In 2007, the Supreme Court prohibited districts from taking explicit steps to increase racial diversity because, according to the plurality opinion, racial isolation in schools resulted only from “de facto” neighborhood segregation—accidents of economic differences, demographic trends, and personal choices.

This widely shared view is historically inaccurate. Neighborhoods in major metropolitan areas are segregated because of a century-long pattern of racially motivated and racially explicit federal, state, and local policies of banking regulation, mortgage guarantees, public housing, law enforcement, planning and zoning, highway and school construction, and urban renewal (Rothstein 2012, 2013; Rothstein and Santow 2012a). Effects of these public policies endure; segregation of major urban areas today offends the Constitution and calls for a remedy.

It is inconceivable to think that education as a civil rights issue can be addressed without addressing residential segregation—a housing goal of the March on Washington. Housing policy is school policy; equality of education relies upon eliminating the exclusionary zoning ordinances of white suburbs and subsidizing dispersed housing in those suburbs for low-income African Americans now trapped in central cities.<sup>29</sup>

By stressing integration as the most important goal of education improvement, the March on Washington had

it right. It is appropriate not only to commemorate this resolve, but to renew it.

## About the author

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## Endnotes

1. The charter school sector that school reformers promote is more segregated than the regular public sector with which it competes (Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, and Wang 2010).
2. Former Secretary of Education Rod Paige, who presided over the adoption and implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act, titled his memoir, *The Black–White Achievement Gap: Why Closing It Is the Greatest Civil Rights Issue of Our Time*. The phrase has been used by many others, including both Barack Obama and Mitt Romney in their 2012 presidential campaigns. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan frequently refers to the achievement gap as the “civil rights issue of our generation” (Duncan 2010).
3. The Annie E. Casey Foundation defines a high-poverty neighborhood as one where 30 percent or more of families have incomes below the poverty line.

4. “If our nation were to return to the rates of incarceration we had in the 1970s, we would have to release 4 out of 5 people behind bars” (Alexander 2011).
5. After President Kennedy’s assassination later that year, President Johnson promoted the act to passage.
6. The Office of Education was then part of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Education programs would not be split off into a separate cabinet department for another 17 years.
7. The account here and in the following paragraphs of the origin of and early controversy surrounding the education survey (referred to as the “Coleman Report”) in the Civil Rights Act draws primarily on Grant (1973).
8. The difference in combined reading and math scores was about 1.5 standard deviations (Reardon 2011, Figure 5.3). Assuming a normal distribution, a student whose achievement was 1.5 standard deviations above that of the average student would rank at about the 95th percentile in achievement. Possibly, the black–white gap was even greater because at that time, many fewer black than white students completed high school. In 1970, 58 percent of black young adults (ages 25–29) had completed high school, compared with 78 percent of white young adults (NCES 2012, Table 8.5). If we assume that completers had better reading and math skills than dropouts, the gap would have exceeded 1.5 standard deviations, meaning the average black youth achieved at a lower level than virtually any white youth. This gap is not inconsistent with the reality that some above-average-achieving black students had higher test scores than nearly half of white students. But virtually no black students (only about 5 percent) had higher test scores than the average white student.
9. The Coleman Report found a combined difference in reading and math scores of one full standard deviation, compared with Project Talent’s 1.5. It is not conceivable that the real gap could shrink by half a standard deviation in only five years. The decline could reflect only that different grades were assessed in Project Talent and in the Coleman study (i.e., the gap for high school students surveyed in Project Talent was larger than the gap for the range of elementary and secondary grades surveyed by Coleman), that the two surveys had different questions, or that results in both surveys were less precise than hoped for.
10. For an account of George Romney’s efforts to promote residential integration, see Rothstein and Santow (2012a).
11. For a full account of the development of the National Assessment, see Chapter 6 of Rothstein, Jacobsen, and Wilder (2008).
12. NAEP has continued to assess a few other academic subjects on a very sporadic basis.
13. The Department of Education describes the difference between the two designs as the difference between one (the LTT) whose items remain stable over time so that trends can be reported, and one (the Main NAEP) whose items change as the underlying public school curriculum changes. In practice, however, the Department of Education itself regularly reports trend data on the Main NAEP, and both assessments change over time. Indeed, the impracticality of having an assessment whose items are intended to remain stable as students’ curricula and environments change is one reason why the LTT was revised substantially in 2004. Although the Main NAEP includes items requiring more reasoning than items on the LTT, the Main NAEP is still not a test of very advanced reasoning skills. Constructing a test of reasoning skills is a particular challenge in mathematics, because the greater a test’s reliance on solving problems than on applying algorithms, the more it becomes a reading and not a math test.
14. The National Center for Education Statistics of the Department of Education oversees NAEP and describes results for the LTT as being for “9 year olds” and “13 year olds,” not for fourth- and eighth-graders. However, in practice, contractors administering NAEP no longer seek out, as part of their samples, 9- and 13-year-olds who are not in the fourth and eighth grades, respectively, so this report refers to the LTT as a test of fourth- and eighth-graders. Both the LTT and Main NAEP are also administered to 12th-graders (for the LTT, the department refers to them as 17-year-olds). However, a test given to 12th-graders should not be employed to investigate black–white achievement comparisons, because blacks



and whites have different dropout rates and trends, and black students who drop out may not have the same achievement distribution as whites who drop out. For these reasons, this report does not address 12th-grade NAEP results.

15. This and the summary discussion of NAEP trends that follows rely on data in Appendix Table 1 that has been posted at the end of this publication's Web page, <http://www.epi.org/publication/unfinished-march-public-school-segregation>. Tables with NAEP data in the text of this report use data from Appendix Table 1 but create comparability between NAEP tests in math and reading by interpolating scores from preceding and successive years for years in which a test (LTT or Main NAEP, math or reading) was not administered. Standard deviations in NAEP tests are usually about 32 scale points, and this approximate figure is the basis of discussion in the text. NAEP data for the Main NAEP and for the LTT since 1978 can be downloaded from the NAEP Data Explorer, <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata/>. LTT data for years prior to 1978 are reported by Campbell et al. (1996).
16. This summary is an average of math and reading gains for both fourth and eighth grades.
17. See, for example, a *Washington Post* op-ed by Bill Gates (2011), whose charitable foundation has supported many "school reform" programs. Gates flatly asserts, offering no evidence, that "over the past four decades, the per-student cost of running our K-12 schools has more than doubled, while our student achievement has remained virtually flat."
18. For example, in a speech at the National Press Club announcing grants to states under his "Race to the Top" competition, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said, without acknowledging in any way the gains made in achievement in recent years: "The achievement gap is unacceptable. Education is the civil rights issue of our generation" (Duncan 2010).
19. Mosteller and Moynihan's observation is worth reporting verbatim: "To the simple of mind or heart, such [Coleman Report] findings might be interpreted to mean that 'schools don't make any difference.' This is absurd.

Schools make a very great difference to children. Children don't think up algebra on their own. It took a whole sequence of civilizations even to invent it. But given that schools have reached their present levels of quality, the observed variation in schools was reported by [the Coleman Report] to have little effect upon school achievement. This actually means a large joint effect owing to both schools and home background...little that is unique to schools or homes. They vary together" (Mosteller and Moynihan 1972, 21).

20. Subsequent research has demonstrated that smaller class sizes in the early grades have particular benefit for disadvantaged children. Although some policymakers have drawn exaggerated conclusions from this research, claiming that smaller class sizes are always beneficial, few dispute that smaller class sizes benefit disadvantaged students in the early grades. For a summary of the debate, see Mishel and Rothstein (2002).
21. NAEP collected background information on whether the household received a newspaper. Today, as newspaper circulation has fallen while newspaper reading on-line has increased, newspapers in homes is probably no longer as valid a measure of family literacy.
22. Not shown in Table 3 is that black family poverty experienced by NAEP test takers continued to decline from 2003 to 2008, but then rose rapidly after 2008.
23. The phrase was coined by William Julius Wilson, in his 1987 book by that name.
24. Charlotte-Mecklenberg is a county-wide school district that includes both suburban areas and the city of Charlotte. Expanded versions of Tables 8 and 9, showing all large urban districts that participated in NAEP in 2011 and that had sufficient sample sizes of African American students, have been posted as Appendix Tables 2a, 2b, and 3 at the end of this publication's Web page, <http://www.epi.org/publication/unfinished-march-public-school-segregation>.
25. The share of college graduates working at jobs that do not require a college degree was increasing before the 2008 recession, and has accelerated since. For 20- to 24-year-olds, the share increased from 30 percent to 34

percent to 39 percent from 2000 to 2007 to 2011. For 25- to 29-year-olds the increase was from 24 percent to 26 percent to 30 percent (Mishel et al. 2012, Figure 4AK). Unpaid internships for college students have increased (Perlin 2012, 28). Evidence regarding college graduates having to accept poorly paid internships is anecdotal but sufficiently commonplace to be persuasive. A plausible explanation for the growth of unpaid or poorly paid student internships is that internship experience has become a helpful qualification for college graduates hoping to find their first jobs following graduation, a condition related to increased competition for a limited number of job opportunities.

26. Otherwise equivalent job applicants with white-sounding names get called for interviews more frequently than otherwise equivalent applicants with black-sounding names (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2003). White job applicants with criminal records get called for interviews more frequently than otherwise equivalent black applicants without criminal records (Pager 2003).
27. For an illustration of how impractical it would be to integrate schools in the Detroit metropolitan area with its current segregated residential patterns, see Rothstein and Santow (2012b).
28. The term “hypersegregation” was employed by Massey and Denton (1993) to describe the extreme forms of geographic isolation, frequently government imposed, experienced by African Americans in urban areas.
29. “Housing Policy Is School Policy” is the title of a report showing that black student achievement rises with integration, and that the gains diminish as the share of low-income black students in middle-class schools increases (Schwartz 2010). The report also compares the benefits of integration with those of increased compensatory education funding for disadvantaged students in schools with less integration, and finds the former to be a more powerful intervention.

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