

Resegregation in Denver Public Schools:

Overlapping Systems of Student Segregation, Disparate Contexts, and
Reduced Outcomes

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Executive Summary

Study Context

Although the harms of school segregation are so well understood that the federal government actively engaged in desegregation policies for decades, school segregation has been on the rise since the end of federal intervention. This study seeks to understand the extent – if any – this holds true in Denver Public Schools (DPS), which was under a desegregation order from 1973 through 1995. By first identifying whether schools are segregated in the district, this study could then investigate the student populations, school contexts, and academic outcomes in those schools to evaluate both the extent of school segregation as well as its characteristics and consequences.

Key Findings

School segregation is pervasive.

Between approximately one in five and one half of schools in DPS are segregated by race or class, making school segregation not only present in the district but also pervasive.

Schools are triple segregated by race, class, and language.

Segregated schools serve extreme concentrations of additional unrelated student populations. These multiple sites of concentration result in schools that are triple segregated by student race, class, and language.

- Schools segregated by race (student of color status) have above-average rates of students in poverty, English Learners, and Special Education students, with below-average rates of Gifted and Talented students.
- Schools segregated by poverty have above-average rates of students of color, English Learners, and Special Education students, with below-average rates of Gifted and Talented students.
- Schools segregated by race (white student status) have above-average rates of Gifted and Talented and wealthy students, with below-average rates of students in poverty, English Learners, and Special Education students.
- Schools segregated by wealth have above-average rates of Gifted and Talented and white students, with below-average rates of students of color, English Learners, and Special Education students.

Latinos, English Learners, white students, and wealthy students are more likely to attend segregated schools than non-segregated schools.

The majority of some student populations attend segregated schools. Latinos, English Learners, white students, wealthy students (non-Free and Reduced Lunch status), and Gifted and Talented students are more likely to attend segregated schools than non-segregated schools.

- More than half of all Latino students in the district attend schools segregated by poverty.

- More than half of all English Learner students in the district attend schools segregated by race (student of color status) or poverty.
- More than half of all Gifted and Talented students in the district attend schools segregated by race (white student status) or wealth.
- More than three in four of all white students in the district attend schools segregated by wealth.

Segregated schools operate under disparate statuses, designations, and resource allocations.

Segregated schools do not reflect district averages regarding charter status, the number of center-based programs, or tier of support designations. Schools segregated by marginalized students (student of color status and poverty) have lower rates of center-based programs than schools segregated by privileged students while also being overrepresented in charter status and “intensive” tier of support intervention status.

- Schools segregated by marginalized students (student of color status and poverty) are overrepresented in charter school status, have lower rates of multiple center-based programs than the district average, and are more likely to receive “intensive” tier of support interventions than the district average.
- Schools segregated by privileged students (white student status and wealth) are overrepresented in district-run school status, have higher rates of multiple center-based programs than the district average, and are more likely to receive “universal” tier of support interventions than the district average.

All students in schools segregated by marginalized students had average lower achievement.

In every student population, students in schools segregated by marginalized students (student of color status and poverty) have average four-year high school completion rates that are below the district averages. In every student population, students in schools segregated by privileged students (white student status and wealth) have average four-year high school completion rates that are above the district averages. Schools segregated by privileged students have average four-year high school completion rates that are between 10 and 40 percentage points higher than schools segregated by marginalized students.

Recommendations

These findings indicate that school segregation is a pervasive problem in Denver Public Schools, impacts a majority of certain student populations such as Latino and English Learner students, represents disparate and at times inferior resources and designations, and reflects reduced student outcomes. Because of the severity of school segregation in the district, we recommend further studies investigate the causes and mechanisms of school segregation in the district so targeted policy solutions can be designed and implemented.

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Introduction

Segregated education has generally been thought of as harmful to the health, well-being, and prospects of our young people, our communities, and our society. Conversely, integrated education has generally been held as a model that allows for higher achievement and community participation for all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and language. But are these suppositions true?

There is strong [evidence](#) that students enrolled in schools that are socioeconomically integrated score higher on standardized tests, enroll in colleges at higher rates, are less likely to drop out, and have significantly reduced racial/ethnic/socioeconomic/native-language-based achievement gaps. Students and graduates from these schools have significantly reduced racial biases and stereotypes and along with enhanced leadership skills, have higher earnings as adults, improved health outcomes, and are less likely to be incarcerated. Integrated educational settings, based on diverse race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and native language speakers *WORK*.

So what is segregation? According to US code, “the term “segregation” means the operation of a school system in which students are wholly or substantially separated among the schools of an educational agency on the basis of race, color, sex, or national origin or within a school on the basis of race, color, or national origin.”¹

The history of educational segregation in Denver and Colorado is extensive and historic. School District No. 1 (Denver) effectively began in the winter of 1862. Initially, the students were integrated with both black and white students attending school in the same building, however, by 1868 residents requested separate schools for white and black students.

Then in 1914, the *Francisco Maestas et al vs. George H. Shone et al* case, set in Alamosa, Colorado, became one of the earliest challenges to school segregation in the United States where racial and ethnic background as well as linguistic needs of the students. This case came just 17 years after the 1896 US Supreme Court decision *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, which upheld the constitutionality of racial segregation under the “separate but equal” doctrine.

Almost 55 years later, beginning in 1968, Denver Public Schools attempted to desegregate the school district via resolutions from the school board that would have redrawn the school boundaries put in place to maintain segregation in the district as well as created voluntary busing to integrate some of the

¹ [20 USC § 1720\(c\)](#)

schools. In response to these voluntary desegregation plans, the citizenry of Denver elected a new slate of anti-integration board members who immediately repealed the resolutions. Then in June of 1969, [“eight families — five Black, one Hispanic, and two white — sued Denver Public Schools. The case became known as Keyes v. School District No. 1.”](#) In the subsequent few years, Denver exploded with violence against the attempts to desegregate the district. The house of the lead plaintiff Wilfred Keyes and the Denver school bus depot was bombed.

In 1973, the US Supreme Court decision on the Keyes case ruling against DPS and found that DPS was indeed segregated "where, as in this case, a policy of intentional segregation has been proved with respect to a significant portion of the school system, the burden is on the school authorities (regardless of claims that their 'neighborhood school policy' was racially neutral) to prove that their actions as to other segregated schools in the system were not likewise motivated by a segregative intent."² The US Supreme Court found that the evidence of segregation in DPS was so widespread that the entire school district was implicated as opposed to just specific neighborhoods. It also found that [“even though a school district has never operated under a law explicitly requiring segregation, it can still act in a way that violates the constitution.”](#)

The Keyes case had additional national implications in that it was the first desegregation ruling outside the South, post-Brown, and addressed segregation aimed at racial and ethnic communities *in addition* to the African American community. Additionally, DPS was also bound by the Congress of Hispanic Educators 1984 Consent Decree which was attached to the Keyes decision. The Consent Decree found DPS in violation of the federal 1974 Equal Educational Opportunities Act in its serving (or lack thereof) of Limited English Proficiency students (now classified as Multi-Language Learners).

In response to the court order, DPS engaged in over two decades of systematic busing to integrate the schools of the district. Then in September 1995, US District Judge Richard Matsch ruled that Denver had “complied in good faith” with the desegregation order and had eliminated segregation “to the extent practicable.”

And now, 50 years after the US Supreme Court’s ruling on Keyes and less than 30 years after the Keyes case was dismissed, DPS has found itself to effectively be more segregated now than when Keys was first addressed.

² [Keyes v. School District No. 1, Denver](#), 413 U.S. 189 (1973).

Methods

Research Questions

Due to the history of segregation and desegregation in Denver Public Schools, the current study sought to address the primary research question, *are any DPS schools segregated by race or class, and, if so, what are their student population, school context, and achievement characteristics?* This question was guided by following sub-questions:

- What is the number and percentage of DPS schools that are segregated by race and class?
- What are the average student populations of different student groups in segregated schools?
- Of all the students per student group in the district, how many and what percentage segregated schools across the district?
- What are the school contexts in schools segregated by race and class?
- What are the achievement outcomes in schools segregated by race and class?

Data Sources

In this study we used publicly available data from the Colorado Department of Education website [Colorado Education Statistics](#) for the most recent year that data were available, the 2021-2022 academic year for student demographic data and the 2020-2021 academic year for high school completion data. We also used data from Denver Public Schools from the 2022-2023 academic year describing School Contexts (charter status, tier of intervention, and number of center-based programs).

Process

To answer the primary research question, we first had to create metrics to define segregation and investigate whether any schools could be classified as segregated using those metrics. Since the original goal of desegregation in the district was to ensure each school had student populations that resembled the district averages, we defined segregation as extreme deviation from the district averages. We decided that any school that had percentages of students of color (to represent schools segregated by race) or students receiving Free and Reduced Lunch services (to represent schools segregated by class) that were 20% above or below the district school-level average for each population would be classified as segregated.

To calculate these metrics, we first found the average percentages of students of color and students receiving Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) services per school. Table 1 shows the district averages per school for these student populations.

Table 1.

Average Percentages of Student Populations in Denver Public Schools per School

	Students of Color (SoC)	FRL Students
Average Percent per School	78.89%	65.47%

Then, we calculated 20% of the district averages for students of color (SoC) and student FRL status. We used these calculations to create thresholds for student populations that would be 20% higher than the district average and 20% lower than the district average for students of color and students receiving FRL services. If schools had student populations that were 20% or more higher than the district average for these students, we classified them as segregated by SoC or Low SES students. If schools had student populations that were 20% or more below the district average, we classified them as being segregated

by white students or High SES students. Since the student of color and FRL statuses are binaries, all student either hold the label of “student of color” or “white;” “FRL” or “Non-FRL.” Therefore, if a school has populations of SoC and FRL students that are far below the district average, by default that means they also have student populations of white and non-FRL (a proxy for High SES) students that are much higher than the district average.

Table 2 shows the calculations for 20% of each student population, and Tables 3 and 4 show how segregation was calculated and defined for schools segregated by race and class. In our calculations to create these categories we compared percentages of student groups out to six decimal places; however, to improve legibility the results in Tables 2-4 were rounded to only two decimal places. As such, they represent approximations for how we defined each category.

Table 2.

Calculations for 20% Above or Below Average Percentages of Students of Color (SoC) and Students Receiving Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) Services

	SoC	FRL Students
Average Percent per School	78.89%	65.47%
20% of Average	15.78	13.09
20% Above Average	94.67% or more	78.56% or more
20% Below Average	63.11% or less	52.38% or less

Table 3.

Ranges of Student Populations in Schools Segregated by Race

	District Average	White Segregated Schools <i>20% or More Below District Average for SoC</i>	No Segregation <i>Within 20% of District Average for SoC</i>	SoC Segregated Schools <i>20% or More Above District Average for SoC</i>
Student Population				
Students of Color (SoC)	78.89%	0% - 63.11%	63.12% - 94.66%	94.67% - 100%
White Students	21.11%	37.89% - 100%	5.34% - 36.88%	0% - 5.33%

Table 4.

Ranges of Student Populations in Schools Segregated by Class

	District Average	High SES Segregated Schools <i>20% or More Below District Average for FRL</i>	No Segregation <i>Within 20% of District Average for FRL</i>	Low SES Segregated Schools <i>20% or More Above District Average for FRL</i>
Student Population				
Free & Reduced Lunch (FRL)	65.47%	0% - 52.38%	52.39% - 78.55%	78.56% - 100%
Non-Free & Reduced Lunch	34.53%	47.62% - 100%	21.45% - 47.61%	0% - 21.44%

Finally, we used these calculations to find which schools, if any, had student populations that were 20% or more above or below the district averages for students of color and students receiving Free and

Reduced Lunch services, which we defined as being segregated by race and class. Table 5 shows the number and percent of segregated schools in the district. Because six schools did not have Free and Reduced Lunch data, those schools were not included in the calculations for segregation by class. As such, the total number of schools used to calculate the percentages for racially segregated schools (n=203) is slightly different than the total number of schools used to calculate the percentages for schools segregated by class (n=195). These results show that between one if five and nearly one in two schools in the district are segregated.

Table 5.
Number and Percentage of Segregated Schools in DPS per Type of Segregation

	White Segregated	SoC Segregated	High SES Segregated	Low SES Segregated
Number	47	73	52	87
Percentage	23.2%	36.0%	26.4%	44.2%

Finally, we used these categories to analyze the student demographics, school contexts, and achievement outcomes in segregated schools. Findings from this analysis are below.

Finding 1: Disparate Student Demographics

Segregated schools were home to extreme concentrations of unrelated student populations of English Learners, Special Education students, and Gifted and Talented students.

Summary

This study found that unrelated student populations were consistently concentrated in schools segregated by race and class. Because there is no necessary relationship between these other student characteristics (like English Learner and Special Education status) and student race and class, the fact that we found co-occurring concentrations indicates that many students attend schools that are double or triple segregated, such as by race *and* language *and* class. Table 6 shows the average percentages of other student populations in segregated schools.

Table 6.

Average Percentages of Student Populations and Enrollment in Schools Segregated by Race and Class

Student Populations	District Avg.	Schools Segregated by			
		White Students	Students of Color	High SES Students	Low SES Students
Enrollment (n)	436	585	378	605	339
Student Race					
Latino	55.9	20.1	76.4	24.6	72.2
Black	14.3	8.6	13.8	9.1	14.2
Students of Color	78.5	40.3	96.6	44.6	92.9
White	21.5	59.7	3.4	55.4	7.1
Student Class					
Free & Reduced Lunch (Low SES)	65.5	24.2	83.8	26.7	86.4
Non-Free & Reduced Lunch (High SES)	34.5	75.9	16.2	73.3	13.6
Student Services					
English Learner	31.0	7.9	46.8	9.3	43.4
Gifted/Talented	6.7	11.5	4.3	10.4	5.0
Special Education	13.2	10.5	13.7	10.4	14.4

Figure 1. Average Student Population Percentages in Schools Segregated by Students of Color, White Students, and All District Schools

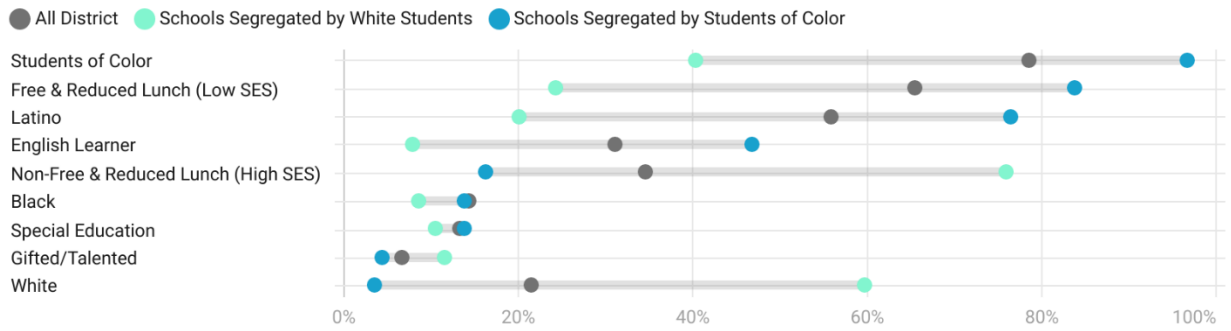


Figure 2. Changes in Average Student Population Percentages Between Schools Segregated by White Students and Students of Color

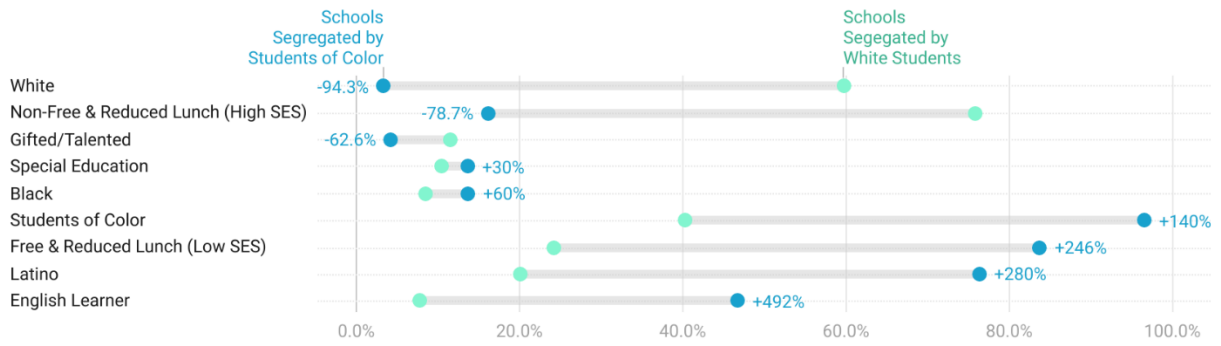


Figure 3. Average Student Population Percentages in Schools Segregated by Students of Color, White Students, and All District Schools

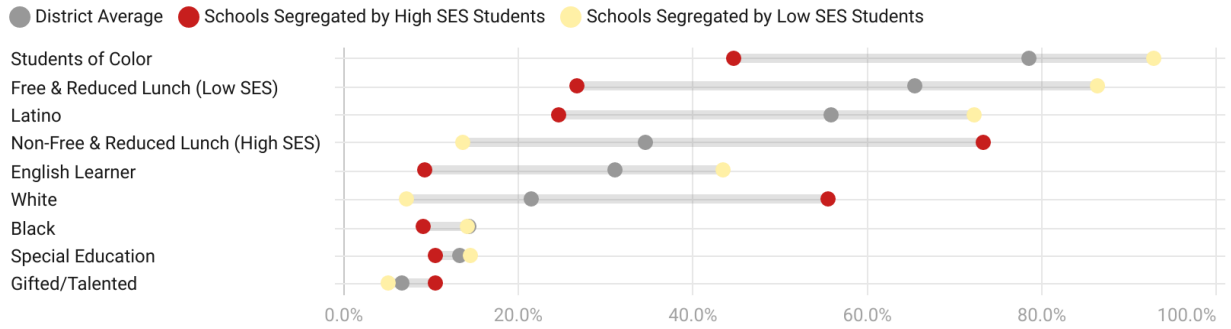
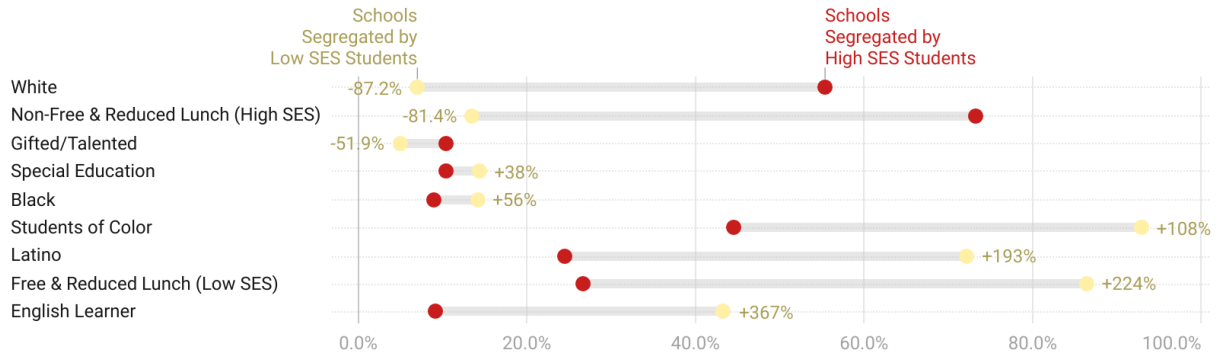


Figure 4. Changes in Average Student Population Percentages Between Schools Segregated by High SES and Low SES Students



These results show that unrelated student populations are also concentrated in schools segregated by race and class. For example, although English Learners are about one-third of all DPS students, on average they are nearly half (46.8%) of students in schools segregated by students of color and less than one-tenth (7.9%) of students in schools segregated by White students. Similarly, students attending schools segregated by White students or High SES students are more than twice as likely to be labelled as Gifted and Talented (GT) than students attending schools segregated by students of color or Low SES. We reject the inherently prejudiced logic that holds intellectual gifts and talents are not distributed equally but instead are the special purview of White and wealthy students. To the contrary, we posit that the co-occurrence of higher rates of students attaining the GT label in schools segregated by White and wealthy students indicates that half or more of the gifted and talented students of color and students in poverty (e.g., receiving FRL) are denied recognition of and opportunities to develop their assets.

These results also show that, rather than represent moderate deviations from district means, segregated schools are homes to extreme concentrations of student populations. For example, although White students are 21.5% of the district population, they are on average only 3.4% of schools segregated by students of color and only 7.1% of students in schools segregated by Low SES. This means that White student attend such segregated schools at a rate that is one-third to one-seventh of the district average. Similarly, although to classify as a school segregated by High SES the average population of non-FRL students only needed to be above 47.6%, on average these schools had 73.3% non-FRL students, an enormous 25.7 percentage points higher than the threshold used in this study to classify as segregated.

Notably, these extreme co-occurring concentrations of student populations were not consistent across all racialized, classed, or linguistically-marked groups. For example, on average segregated by Low SES served 14.3% Black students while across the district on average schools served 14.2% Black students, indicating that the representation of Black students in Low SES segregated schools was consistent with district proportions rather than extreme deviations from it. Importantly, schools segregated by students of color actually had *lower* average percentages of Black students than the district average, indicating that Black students were underrepresented in such segregated schools. In order to achieve the incredibly high average percentage of students of color (96.6%) in schools segregated by students of color, the overwhelming majority of raced students in these schools were Latino (76.4%) even though in the district Latinos only represent 55.9% of an average school population. Latinos were equally overrepresented in schools segregated by Low SES, where on average they made up 72.2% of the student body.

Taken together, these results indicate that many segregated schools were sites of double or triple segregation, where students of color – and Latinos in particular – Low SES, and bilingual students were concentrated at rates far beyond the district averages. At the same time, schools segregated by White and wealthy students saw much higher rates of White and wealthy students than even the segregation thresholds would suggest, indicating that rather than represent sites of moderate segregation the concentration of White and wealthy students in these schools is extreme. Students in these schools were two to three times as likely to be labelled as Gifted and Talented compared to their peers in schools segregated by students of color and Low SES, suggesting that in Denver Public Schools the opportunity to have one's academic assets recognized and served is disproportionately denied to students of color and students receiving Free and Reduced Lunch. These concentrations of student populations were not limited to only a few schools or a few students. Sadly, many students in the district attended segregated schools. As the above results show, because schools likely experience

double or triple segregation, this means that many students in the district also attend doubly or triply segregated schools. Table 7 shows the total number and percentage of different student populations that attend segregated schools.

Table 7.

Total Number and Percentages of Student Populations in the District Attending Schools Segregated by Race and Class

Student Populations	District Total <i>N</i>	White Students		Schools Segregated by					
		<i>N</i>	%	Students of Color		High SES Students		Low SES Students	
				<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Student Race									
Latino	46229	5867	12.7	21491	46.5	7642	16.5	23656	51.2
Black	11900	2583	21.7	3418	28.7	3291	27.7	4074	34.2
Students of Color	65990	11610	17.6	26650	40.4	14395	21.8	29672	45.0
White	22592	15886	70.3	939	4.2	17090	75.6	1876	8.3
Student Class									
Free & Reduced Lunch (Low SES)	52668	6704	12.7	22939	43.6	8625	16.4	26545	50.4
Non-Free & Reduced Lunch (High SES)	35038	20247	57.8	4416	12.6	22860	65.2	4127	11.8
Student Services									
English Learner	25671	2259	8.8	13494	52.6	3016	11.7	14980	58.4
Gifted/Talented	6355	3719	58.5	940	14.8	4077	64.2	963	15.2
Special Education	10776	2497	23.2	3663	34.0	2948	27.4	4325	40.1

Figure 5. Percentages of EL Students in the District Attending Schools Segregated by Race and Class



Figure 6. Percentages of GT Students in the District Attending Schools Segregated by Race and Class



Figure 7. Percentages of Latino Students in the District Attending Schools Segregated by Race and Class



Figure 8. Percentages of White Students in the District Attending Schools Segregated by Race and Class



These results show that some student populations are much more likely to attend segregated schools. Specifically, Latino students are nearly twice as likely (46.5%) as Black students (28.7%) to attend schools segregated by students of color, while they are approximately half as likely (12.7%) as Black students (21.7%) to attend schools segregated by Whites students. In schools segregated by class, Latino overrepresentation is even more dramatic: more than half of all Latino students (51.2%) in DPS attend schools segregated by Low SES. Unfortunately, this overrepresentation is not limited to Latino students. Approximately three in five (58.4%) of all English Learner students in the district attend schools segregated by Low SES, schools where – as seen previously – historically marginalized students are much less likely to be recognized for their gifts and talents.

The inverse of these trends also holds. Only 4.2% of White students attend schools segregated by students of color and only 8.3% of White students attend schools segregated by Low SES. Instead, White students are overwhelmingly concentrated in schools segregated by White students and High SES: Of all the White students in the district, 70.3% attend schools segregated by White students and an incredible 75.6% attend schools segregated by High SES. This means that in Denver Public Schools, White students have only a one-in-four chance of attending a school that is *not* segregated by High SES, and about a one-in-three chance of attending a school that is *not* segregated by White students. Likewise, of all students in the district who do not qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch services (a proxy for higher-income, or High SES, status), over half (57.8%) attended schools segregated by White students and more than three in five (65.2%) attended schools segregated by High SES students.

Schools segregated by High SES were also home to 64.2% of all Gifted and Talented students in the district, although they only served about a tenth (11.7%) of all English Learners in the district. Schools segregated by White students saw a similar trend, serving 58.5% of all Gifted and Talented students in the district but less than one tenth (8.8%) of English Learners. Together, this means that students labelled as Gifted and Talented had a six-in-ten chance of going to a school segregated by White and wealthy students, while English Learners had a one-in-ten chance of joining them there. Conversely, English Learners had a higher-than 50% chance of attending a school segregated by students of color and Low SES students, while their Gifted and Talented peers had less than a 20% chance of the same.

Again, positioning this work as in direct opposition to eugenicist logic that would normalize these disparities, we hold that it is not that Gifted and Talented students are more likely to be White and wealthy but rather White and wealthy students are more likely to be *seen* as Gifted and Talented by Denver Public Schools. The failure to recognize the gifts and talents of bilingual students with the English Learner label, students of color, or students receiving Free and Reduced Lunch services represents an institutional shortcoming that defies educational best practices and the district's obligation to fairly serve its students and community.

Finally, these results also indicate that Black and Latino students are not impacted by school segregation on the same scale. Instead, Latino students are almost twice as likely as Black students to attend schools segregated by students of color and Low SES students. Conversely, White and High SES students were considerably more likely to attend segregated schools than their Low SES and student of color peers. As such, school segregation does not affect all DPS students equally: White and wealthier students are overwhelmingly more likely to attend whiter and wealthier segregated schools than Black, Brown, or FRL students are to attend schools segregated by students of color or FRL status.

Finding 2: Disparate School Contexts

Segregated schools exemplify disparate school contexts regarding charter status, center-based programs, and Tier of Support designations.

Summary

Schools that were segregated by race and class were home to disparities in unrelated school characteristics, indicating that segregated schools likewise serve students under unique and disparate contexts regarding charter status, center-based programs, and Tier of Support designations.

Charter Status

Charter status is an area in which segregated schools demonstrated pronounced differences. Table 8 shows the number and percentage of segregated schools according to their status as either charters or district-run.

Table 8.

Counts and Percentages of Segregated Schools per Charter and District-Run Status

School Status	Schools Segregated by									
	District		White Students		Students of Color		High SES Students		Low SES Students	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Charter	57	28.2	9	19.6	30	41.1	9	17.3	30	32.3
District-Run	145	71.8	37	80.4	43	58.9	43	82.7	63	67.7

Schools segregated by students of color are overrepresented in charter status, with nearly three in five ($m=58.8\%$) of such schools being a charter despite charters representing less than one third ($m=28.2\%$) of all schools in the district. Schools segregated by White students were overrepresented in the district-run status, with 80.4% of such schools being district-run while only 71.8% of all schools in the district were the same. Similarly, schools segregated by High SES were more likely than the district average to be district-run while schools that were segregated by Low SES were more likely than the district average to be charter. These results indicate that charters are home to higher-than-average rates of schools that are segregated by students of color and Low SES students, while district-run schools are home to higher-than-average rates of schools that are segregated by White and High SES students.

Although schools segregated by students of color and low SES students are overrepresented in charter school status, achievement outcomes for historically marginalized students in charters is mixed. Appendix Table 1 (Appendix A) describes average four-year high school completion rates for all student populations examined in this study in charters and district-run schools.

Center-Based Program Count

Center-based programs represent special school-based classrooms that serve specific special needs populations such as autism, affective needs, and deaf/hard of hearing. Segregated schools saw very different rates of these services, despite schools segregated by students of color and Low SES having slightly larger average populations of students receiving Special Education services. Table 9 shows these trends. In the district, there were four schools with four center-based programs, one school with five center-based programs, and one school with nine center-based programs. Together, these schools represent 3% of the district. Because of these low counts and the unrepresentativeness of district trends, these schools were omitted from the analysis in Table 9.

Table 9.

Counts and Rates of Segregated Schools per Number of Center-Based Programs Available

Number of Center- Based Programs Available in School	District		School Segregated by							
			White Students		Students of Color		High SES Students		Low SES Students	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
0	96	48.5	21	45.7	40	56.3	24	46.2	53	58.2
1	58	29.3	11	23.9	24	33.8	12	23.1	23	25.3
2	29	14.7	12	26.1	4	5.6	12	23.1	10	11.0
3	9	4.6	2	4.4	1	1.4	4	7.7	2	2.2
2-3*	38	19.2	14	30.4	5	7.0	16	30.8	12	13.2

* Note: Represents combination of two previous rows to signify schools with multiple (2-3) center-based programs

Schools segregated by White or High SES students were much more likely than schools segregated by student of color or Low SES students to have multiple center-based programs on site. For example, more than five times more schools (26.1%) segregated by White students had two center-based programs than schools segregated by students of color (5.6%). Similarly, schools segregated by High SES students had more than double the rate of offering two center-based programs (23.1%) than schools segregated by Low SES students (11.0%). Students attending schools segregated by White students were almost four times more likely to have multiple center-based programs at their school compared to students attending schools segregated by students of color. Students attending schools segregated by High SES students were almost three times more likely to have multiple center-based programs at their school compared to students at schools segregated by Low SES students.

Conversely, 55.3% of schools segregated by students of color and 58.2% of schools segregated by Low SES students had no center-based programs at all, both of which were higher than the district proportions for having no center-based programs (48.5%). Although in the district 19.2% of schools had multiple center-based programs, schools segregated by students of color or Low SES students were underrepresented in these services with only 7.0% and 13.2% of these respective schools offering these supports. Together, these trends indicate that schools segregated by students of color and Low SES students were overrepresented in offering no center-based programs, while whiter and wealthier schools were overrepresented in offering multiple center-based programs.

Notable among these trends are the disparities between schools segregated by race and class. While schools segregated by Low SES students were a third as likely to have multiple center-based programs compared schools segregated by High SES students, schools segregated by students of color had multiple center-based programs at approximately a quarter of the rate as schools segregated by

White students. This implies that in the case of center-based programs, schools segregated by race and class do not disadvantage their students equally; on the contrary, schools that are segregated by students of color are disadvantaged in ways that exceed those that are segregated by Low SES.

Tier of Support

Tiers of support refer to how the district categorizes levels of intervention a school receives. Schools that the district deems as successful receive fewer interventions and supports under the “Universal” designation; schools that the district deems as unsuccessful receive more intense interventions and supports under the “Intensive” designation. Although the district does not define specific interventions that mandatorily accompany each tier of support, on the website [Helping All Schools Improve](#) the district explains, “We provide increasing intensity of support for higher needs schools to implement their improvement plans. This starts with providing customized network supports, including more resources, help from content experts, leadership development and coaching in ways to strengthen school culture... . We also tailor our supports to the unique needs of each school to provide additional improvement planning support when applicable... .” (Denver Public Schools, Helping All Schools Improve, 2023). Table 10 shows the representation of segregated schools in each tier of support category. Note: Not all schools had tier of support data available, resulting in a smaller sample size of 125 schools. Rates in the above table reference the reduced 125-school sample rather than the original 203-school sample.

Table 10.
Counts and Rates of Tier of Support Classification in Segregated Schools

Tier of Support at School	District Avg.		Schools Segregated by							
			White Students		Students of Color		High SES Students		Low SES Students	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Universal	82	65.6	34	94.4	18	60.0	36	85.7	24	50.0
Strategic	17	13.6	2	5.6	1	3.3	5	11.9	7	14.6
Intensive	26	20.8	0	0.00	11	36.7	11	2.4	17	35.4

Segregated schools were categorized as needing different tiers of support at rates disproportionate to their representation in the district. This resulted in schools segregated by students of color and FRL students being overrepresented in the tier receiving the most intensive interventions due to perceived failing status (“Intensive” tier), while schools segregated by White and wealthier students being overrepresented in the schools deemed more successful and thus less in need of interventions (“Universal” tier). For example, no schools segregated by White students received the most intrusive form of interventions (“Intensive”), while more than one in three schools segregated by students of color did. Instead, the overwhelming majority of White segregated schools (94.44%) received the lowest, least intrusive type of intervention called “Universal.” A similar dynamic is evident in schools segregated by class, with over one in three schools segregated by Low SES students receiving the most intrusive type of intervention (“Intensive”) while less than 3% of schools segregated by High SES received these intervention, meaning that schools segregated by Low SES students were over ten times more likely to be subjected to intensive district intervention than schools segregated by High SES students.

While it is arguable that providing more interventions and supports is helpful to schools, those schools also experience interruptions, stigma, curriculum redesigns, and teacher de-professionalization that can be perceived as negative or punitive by the educators and students within them.

Finding 3: Disparate Achievement Outcomes

Segregated schools exemplify disparate rates of student achievement as represented by four-year high school completion rates. Schools segregated by students of color and Low SES had lower four-year high school completion rates than the district average in every student population category.

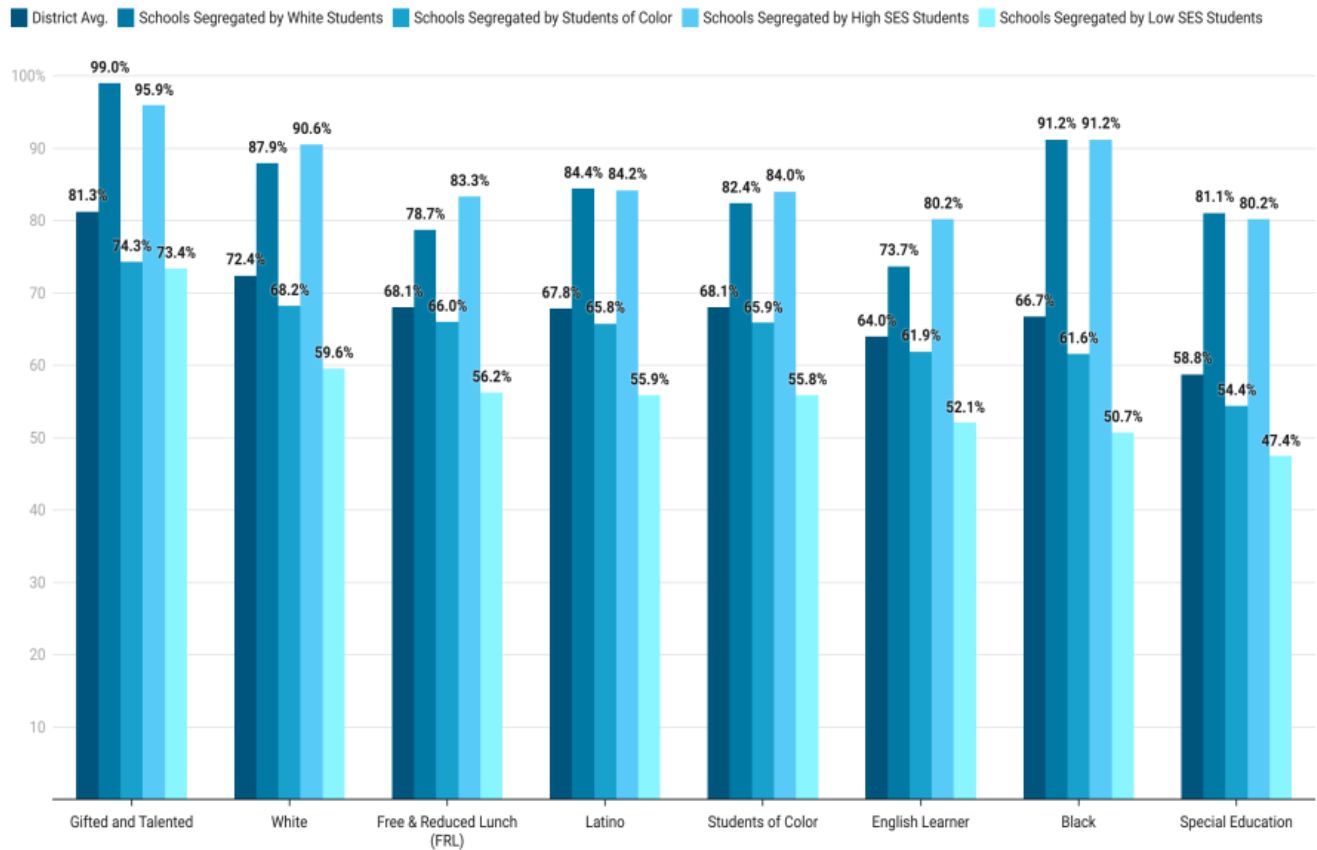
Summary

Schools segregated by students of color and Low SES students consistently had four-year high school completion rates that were lower than the district average for all student populations. When compared to schools segregated by White and High SES students, the differences were extremely pronounced, at times representing disparities in completion rates up to 30 percentage points. Table 11 shows these trends. Note: The Colorado Department of Education does not report high school completion or graduation rates by non-FRL status, so this category is omitted from the below table.

Table 11.
Average Four-Year High School Completion Rates per Student Population in Segregated Schools

Student Population	District Avg.	Schools Segregated by:			
		White Students	Students of Color	High SES Students	Low SES Students
Student Race					
Latino	67.82	84.41	65.76	84.20	55.88
Black	66.73	91.21	61.62	91.22	50.72
Students of Color	68.08	82.43	65.89	84.00	55.84
White	72.41	87.92	68.21	90.57	59.60
Student Class					
Free & Reduced Lunch (FRL)	68.08	78.72	66.01	83.34	56.24
Student Services					
English Learner	63.99	73.69	61.91	80.23	52.07
Gifted and Talented	81.26	99.04	74.30	95.94	73.36
Special Education	58.75	81.06	54.36	80.17	47.44

Figure 9. Average Four-Year High School Completion Rates in by Student Population in Segregated Schools



In schools segregated by students of color and Low SES students, the average four-year high school completion rate for each student population did not reach that of the district average in any student category. Instead, these schools had completion rates between 2.1 and 16.0 percentage points lower than the district averages across all student groups. Schools segregated by White students saw average four-year high school completion rates that were above the district average in all student groups. These schools had completion rates between 9.7 (English Learners) and 24.5 (Black students) percentage points higher than the district average. Schools segregated by High SES students had average four-year high school completion rates that were higher than the district average in all student groups, exceeding the district average by between 14.7 (Gifted and Talented) and 24.5 (Black students) percentage points.

Comparing average four-year high school completion rates between schools segregated by White students and schools segregated by students of color, White-segregated schools had completion rates between 11.8 (English Learners) and 29.6 (Black students) percentage points higher than schools segregated by students of color. Likewise, the average four-year high school completion rates in High SES segregated schools were between 22.6 (Gifted and Talented) and 40.5 (Black students) percentage points higher than Low SES segregated schools.

Appendix A

Appendix Table 1.

Average Four-Year High School Completion Rates per Student Population in Charter and District-Run Schools

Student Population	Dist. Avg.	Charter	District-Run
Student Race			
Latino	67.82	68.79	66.85
Black	66.73	70.21	64.40
Students of Color	68.08	69.01	67.21
White	72.41	67.46	73.61
Student Class			
Free & Reduced Lunch (FRL)	68.08	68.71	67.32
Student Services			
English Learner	63.99	61.87	64.34
Gifted and Talented	81.26	84.14	79.38
Special Education	58.75	60.02	57.95