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# Housing and Education Advocates Work Together to Improve Education

BY DAVID ZISSER AND BRENDA SHUM

The national conversation about the quality of public education in the United States almost invariably ignores the interconnection of education and housing. Instead it has focused on fixing “failing schools,” increasing funding, and ever-changing accountability standards. Rarely, if ever, do education reforms include a commitment to sustainable communities and affordable housing.

Housing advocates, by contrast, often tie housing to education outcomes. If residential integration is not compelling enough in and of itself, improving educational opportunity is a priority we can all support. Even so, housing advocates rarely include education reformers or educators in the conversation about how to improve achievement or outcomes, even though teachers, school counselors, and administrators know best how challenges in our communities affect students in the classroom.

Indeed, the challenges that schools face are too complex for advocates to focus on the school system alone. They require advocates to collaborate to propose broader solutions. Studies confirm that residential segregation, the lack of affordable housing, and poor-quality housing have a negative impact on educational outcomes, especially for low-income and minority children.<sup>1</sup> Housing that is racially and

socioeconomically integrated, affordable, and in good condition offers children access to good schools, stability, and health necessary to achieve their potential.

We begin with a discussion of the disparities in education and the limited response of education reformers. Next we explain the impact that housing has on education and identify strategies that housing advocates use to integrate communities, increase the amount of affordable housing, and improve housing quality. We offer a case study that illustrates promising strategies and collaborative opportunities between housing and education advocates. We conclude with a vision for further collaboration between advocates in these two fields.

## The Problem

Over time the problem in public education has been depicted as growing out of an epidemic of failing schools. As a result, policy initiatives have largely focused on tackling low student achievement. However, this framing is too simplistic and ignores the complex factors that contribute to poor student performance.

First, data show that most students are not failing. In fact, the national high school graduation rate for 2010 for white students was 83 percent.<sup>2</sup> While this falls far short of federal expectations that all students be college- and career-ready by 2020, it represents the highest graduation rate since 1976.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Kevin G. Welner & Prudence L. Carter, *Achievement Gaps Arise from Opportunity Gaps*, in CLOSING THE OPPORTUNITY GAP: WHAT AMERICA MUST DO TO GIVE EVERY CHILD AN EVEN CHANCE 2 (Prudence L. Carter & Kevin G. Welner eds., 2013); Maya Brennan, Center for Housing Policy, *The Impacts of Affordable Housing on Education: A Research Summary*, INSIGHTS FROM HOUSING POLICY RESEARCH, May 2011, at 1.

2 National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education* 125 (May 2013) (reporting average freshman graduation rate for public high school students).

3 *Id.* See also Welner & Carter, *supra* note 1, at 2.

Second, when we look closely at which schools and students are failing and why, we see significant variations among race and class in terms of both educational investments and outcomes. For example, black and Hispanic graduation rates were just 66 percent and 71 percent, respectively, for 2010.<sup>4</sup> The dropout rate for students of color is more than double the national average. Twice as many black students as white students fail a grade level. And, third, compared to half of their white and Asian peers, a third of black and Hispanic students are enrolled in college preparatory courses.<sup>5</sup> Even as overall trends show improvements in academic achievement for all students, there has been minimal progress in eliminating these racial disparities in achievement.<sup>6</sup> These gaps are expansive and become wider as income and wealth inequities rise.<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, efforts to close the achievement gap have been limited to punishing “failing schools.” Solutions include accountability, competition, and choice and ignore the extent to which these disparities may be produced by historical, economic, political, and moral decisions over time.<sup>8</sup> The renewed emphasis on accountability has led us to measure only where a student is instead of us focusing on how or why the student may have

gotten there, while the obsession with competition and choice has not come with a commitment to ensuring that all students have equal access to a full range of meaningful school options.<sup>9</sup>

### The Housing-Education Connection

Housing affects education in various ways. We focus on three of the most important housing aspects that have consequences for children’s educational opportunities and outcomes: segregation, affordability, and physical condition.<sup>10</sup>

**SEGREGATION.** Most students continue to attend schools based on where they live, and many of them continue to live in segregated communities that perpetuate the resegregation of our public schools. After four decades of both court-ordered and voluntary efforts to desegregate our schools, more students today attend segregated learning environments than before *Brown v. Board of Education* was decided in 1954.<sup>11</sup>

The racial and socioeconomic integration of schools has a direct impact on K–12 achievement. Students of all races who attend diverse schools are more likely to have higher test scores and better grades than those in schools with high concentrations of low-income and minority

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youth. They also are more likely to graduate from high school and attend college.<sup>12</sup>

What accounts for these differences? Lower-poverty schools are believed to experience higher teacher quality since teachers are more likely to transfer or leave when assigned to poor schools. Low-poverty schools typically have greater levels of parent involvement. Teacher-student interactions are thought to be more positive in low-poverty schools, and peer interactions are viewed as promoting greater student achievement in such schools.<sup>13</sup>

Residential segregation is influenced by policy and is not just a product of private choice. School district lines, and the student assignment zones within them, are determined by government actors and reinforce social stratification in underlying neighborhoods. Disparities in opportunity do not just exist between schools in wealthy and less wealthy communities. Rather, even within districts, there is evidence that individual schools may be differently resourced.

Still, there is little consensus about what the law permits to integrate our schools and communities. Historically, desegregation efforts during the 1980s led to some progress integrating our communities and schools. Today the reliance on the courts to integrate housing and schools has proved challenging. For example, the

4 National Center for Education Statistics, *supra* note 2, at 125.

5 Welner & Carter, *supra* note 1, at 2.

6 Alan Vanneman et al., [National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, Achievement Gaps: How Black and White Students in Public Schools Perform in Mathematics and Reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress 1–5](#) (July 2009); F. Cadelle Hemphill et al., [National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, Achievement Gaps: How Hispanic and White Students in Public Schools Perform in Mathematics and Reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress iii–vi](#) (June 2011).

7 Welner & Carter, *supra* note 1, at 2.

8 Gloria Ladson-Billings, *Lack of Achievement or Loss of Opportunity?*, in *CLOSING THE OPPORTUNITY GAP*, *supra* note 1, at 13.

9 Welner & Carter, *supra* note 1, at 3.

10 Although these three aspects of housing are important, they are not the only factors that influence educational outcomes. E.g., unjust evictions, other landlord abuses of tenants, and condominium conversions also result in unstable housing.

11 *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954). As of 2010, over 74 percent of black students and almost 80 percent of Latino students attended high-minority schools, and at least 15 percent of black students and 14 percent of Latino students were enrolled in “apartheid schools,” which are defined as those where white students constitute less than 1 percent of overall student enrollment (Gary Orfield & Chungmei Lee, [Civil Rights Project, Why Segregation Matters: Poverty and Educational Inequality 4](#) (Jan. 2005); Gary Orfield et al., [Civil Rights Project, E Pluribus ... Separation: Deepening Double Segregation for More Students 9](#) (Sept. 2012)).

12 Welner & Carter, *supra* note 1, at 1–3.

13 Heather Schwartz, [Century Foundation, Housing Policy Is School Policy: Economically Integrative Housing Promotes Academic Success in Montgomery County, Maryland 10](#) (2010).

1968 Fair Housing Act primarily relies on individuals to challenge institutional segregation. And most school districts do not operate under a court-ordered desegregation plan, inviting legal challenges to student assignment plans adopted to minimize racial isolation. Resegregation caused by demographic shifts is viewed as unrelated to a constitutional violation, making it harder to address in court.<sup>14</sup>

Instead advocates can use the natural fluidity in neighborhoods as an opportunity to support sustainable and integrated communities. The flow of residents in and out of neighborhoods often alters their racial composition. Both housing and education advocates need to understand and anticipate these shifts, particularly as they relate to gentrification and resegregation. Preventing the resegregation of our schools and neighborhoods demands a coordinated effort at the local, regional, and state level to sustain integration. Otherwise, resegregation may be inevitable, even with some support for greater racial and economic diversity in the schools and community.<sup>15</sup>

**AFFORDABILITY.** The lack of affordable housing is at the root of housing instability and overcrowding, both of which affect a child's education. "Affordable housing" refers to housing that is subsidized. It is limited to low- and moderate-income residents whose rents do not exceed approximately 30 percent of the household's income. More than 19 million rental households in the United States are "housing cost burdened"—paying at least 30 percent

of their income toward rent.<sup>16</sup> This has a disproportionate impact on minority families, who have higher poverty rates and are much more likely to be renters than homeowners.<sup>17</sup> The poverty rate for blacks and Hispanics is more than twice as high as the rate for whites.<sup>18</sup> Renters are much more likely to be housing-cost burdened than homeowners.<sup>19</sup> As income decreases, the rate of cost burden increases.<sup>20</sup>

Affordable housing provides students with a stable living environment, which is necessary to foster stable relationships with teachers and classmates. More than 16.8 million households moved at least once within a 12-month period, including

almost 13.3 million renter households.<sup>21</sup> More than 20 percent of these renters were black, and nearly 30 percent were below the poverty level.<sup>22</sup> The resulting residential instability contributes to excessive absences and a disruption of peer and teacher networks.<sup>23</sup>

Affordable housing can also reduce overcrowding—an impediment to a student being able to study at home.<sup>24</sup> Overcrowded households are more typical among renters and households of color.<sup>25</sup> Hispanic households are eleven times more likely to be overcrowded than white households, and black households are three times more likely to be overcrowded than white households.<sup>26</sup> Overcrowding contributes to lower math and reading scores, fewer years of education, and lower rates of graduation from high school.<sup>27</sup>

**QUALITY.** The quality of housing has real impact on educational outcomes, health

16 U.S. Census Bureau, *Selected Housing Characteristics: 2008–2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates tbl.DP04* (Dec. 2013) (for data release dates, see U.S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey, 2012 Data Release* (Dec. 17, 2013)).

17 E.g., 55.5 percent of black households rent, compared to 27.3 percent of non-Hispanic white households (U.S. Census Bureau, *Tenure (White Alone, Not Hispanic or Latino Householder): 2008–2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates tbl.B25003H* (Dec. 2013) (for data release dates, see U.S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey, 2012 Data Release, supra* note 16); *id.*, *Tenure (Black or African American Alone Householder) tbl.B25003B*.

18 The poverty rate is 26.5 percent for blacks and 24.1 percent for Hispanics, compared to 12.1 percent for whites (U.S. Census Bureau, *Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months: 2008–2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates tbl.S1701* (Dec. 2013) (for data release dates, see U.S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey, 2012 Data Release, supra* note 16).

19 Compared to 52.8 percent of renters, 15.5 percent of owners are cost-burdened (U.S. Census Bureau, *Selected Housing Characteristics: 2010–2012 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates tbl.CP04* (Dec. 2013) (for data release dates, see U.S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey, 2012 Data Release, supra* note 16).

20 U.S. Census Bureau, *supra* note 18. For instance, the rate of cost burden is 89 percent for renters earning less than \$20,000, 71 percent for renters earning between \$20,000 and \$34,999, and 39 percent for renters earning between \$35,000 and \$49,999 (U.S. Census Bureau, *Household Income by Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income in the Past 12 Months: 2008–2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates tbl.B25074* (Dec. 2013) (for data release dates, see U.S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey, 2012 Data Release, supra* note 16).

21 U.S. Census Bureau, *Housing Migration—Previous Unit—All Occupied Units (National): American Housing Survey tbl.C-06-A0* (Jan. 2013) (for data release date, see Press Release, U.S. Census Bureau, *Housing and Urban Development and Census Bureau Expand Access to Detailed Information on Nation's Housing* (Jan. 3, 2013)).

22 *Id.* *tbl.C-06-RO*.

23 Brennan, *supra* note 1, at 1. See also Mary Cunningham & Graham McDonald, *Urban Institute, Housing as a Platform for Improving Education Outcomes Among Low-Income Children* 6–8 (May 2012).

24 HUD uses a standard of more than one person per room as one measure of overcrowding (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Measuring Overcrowding in Housing 2* (Sept. 2007)).

25 Compared to 1.7 percent of owners, 6.2 percent of renters' homes are overcrowded (U.S. Census Bureau, *Occupancy Characteristics: 2008–2012 tbl.S2501* (Dec. 2013) (for data release dates, see U.S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey, 2012 Data Release, supra* note 16).

26 The U.S. Census Bureau reports that 13.4 percent of Hispanic households, 3.7 percent of black households, and 1.2 percent of non-Hispanic white households are overcrowded (U.S. Census Bureau, *Occupants Per Room: 2008–2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates tbl.B25014I* (Hispanic or Latino Householder), *tbl.B25014B* (Black or African American Alone Householder), *tbl.B25014H* (White Alone, Not Hispanic or Latino Householder) (Dec. 2013) (for data release dates, see U.S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey, 2012 Data Release, supra* note 16).

27 Brennan, *supra* note 1, at 3.

14 Erica Frankenberg, *Metropolitan Schooling and Housing Integration*, *AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION JOURNAL OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT LAW*, Jan. 2009, at 195 (discussing *Freeman v. Pitts*, 503 U.S. 467 (1992)).

15 Gary Orfield, *Housing Segregation Produces Unequal Schools, Causes and Solutions*, in *CLOSING THE OPPORTUNITY GAP*, *supra* note 1, at 52.



## Overcrowding contributes to lower math and reading scores, fewer years of education, and lower rates of graduation from high school.

outcomes, and quality of life. Low-income units, particularly in communities of color, are often plagued with maintenance problems. Over 1.2 million renter-occupied units had severe physical problems in 2010. Black households resided in about 28 percent of these units, and Hispanic households about 19 percent. Another 2.6 million renter-occupied households had moderate physical problems, 3.7 million were uncomfortably cold for 24 hours or more, 3.9 million had signs of mice, and 2 million had mold.<sup>28</sup>

Poor-quality housing can negatively affect children's educational achievement by contributing to physical illness that impairs academic performance. Lead paint exposure can cause developmental and educational deficiencies. Mold and rodent and cockroach infestation, which can necessitate pesticide use, can lead to asthma. The

health concerns that originate from poor housing conditions can cause a student to be chronically absent from school, resulting in reduced performance on standardized tests and in the classroom generally.<sup>29</sup>

### Housing Strategies

Housing advocates employ a number of strategies to integrate communities, stem the displacement of low-income and minority families (and the resulting resegregation) that comes with gentrification, increase affordable housing, and improve housing quality.

**SOURCE-OF-INCOME NONDISCRIMINATION LAWS.** The federal Housing Choice Voucher Program provides vouchers to low-income households to use in the private rental market.<sup>30</sup> The voucher holder pays 30 percent of income toward rent, and the voucher makes up the

difference. Voucher holders often face discrimination and are concentrated in high-poverty neighborhoods and near poor-performing schools.<sup>31</sup> Some municipalities and states have made it illegal to discriminate based on "source of income," including vouchers.<sup>32</sup>

**HOUSING MOBILITY PROGRAMS.** Families that participate in these programs receive vouchers specifically to allow them to move to neighborhoods with relatively low poverty, low concentrations of racial minorities, and high-performing schools. They also receive pre- and postmove counseling to assist them in the transition.<sup>33</sup> In Baltimore 2,000 special housing vouchers were given to families living in public housing or on the waiting list for public housing or vouchers to move to middle-class, predominantly white areas of Baltimore city and adjacent counties.<sup>34</sup> The moves resulted in significant improvements in academic performance, and the children's new schools had a higher percentage of classes taught by qualified teachers.<sup>35</sup>

**INCLUSIONARY ZONING.** Mandatory inclusionary zoning policies require that new housing developments of a minimum number of units include a certain per-

31 [Ingrid Gould Ellen & Keren Mertens Horn, Poverty and Race Research Action Council, Do Federally Assisted Households Have Access to High Performing Public Schools? 5-7 \(Nov. 2012\).](#)

32 Twelve states and 38 cities and counties, including New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Washington, D.C., have adopted statutes prohibiting discrimination based on source of income. (Urban Institute & Poverty and Race Research Action Council, [Expanding Choice: Practical Strategies for Building a Successful Housing Mobility Program](#) app. B (Feb. 2013).

33 [Stefanie DeLuca & Peter Rosenblatt, Increasing Access to High Performing Schools in an Assisted Housing Voucher Program, in Poverty and Race Research Action Council & National Coalition on School Diversity, Finding Common Ground: Coordinating Housing and Education Policy to Promote Integration 35, 37 \(Philip Tegeler ed., Oct. 2011\).](#) See also [Recommendations: Collaborating Across Agencies to Enhance Housing and Education Integration](#), *id.* at 71.

34 [Finding Common Ground](#), *supra* note 33, at 37.

35 *Id.* at 38-40.

28 [U.S. Census Bureau, Housing Problems—Renter-Occupied Units \(National\): 2011 American Housing Survey tbl.C-05-RO \(Dec. 2013\)](#) (for data release date, see Press Release, U.S. Census Bureau, *supra* note 21).

29 Brennan, *supra* note 1, at 4.

30 The Housing Choice Voucher Program is funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and administered by public housing authorities. It was previously referred to as the Section 8 Housing Program.

centage of units that are affordable to low- and moderate-income households. Voluntary inclusionary zoning programs incentivize developers to do the same, usually through density bonuses, expedited permitting processes, or fee waivers or all three. More than 500 localities in the country have inclusionary zoning policies.<sup>36</sup> Montgomery County, Maryland, has the largest and oldest inclusionary zoning program in the country, producing more than 13,000 affordable units since 1976, including about 1,000 units for very low-income families.<sup>37</sup> It has resulted in integrating low-income children into low-poverty neighborhoods and schools over the long term, and this had a positive impact on student performance.<sup>38</sup>

#### **INCENTIVES FOR LOW-INCOME HOUSING TAX CREDITS IN HIGH-OPPORTUNITY AREAS.**

The low-income housing tax credit program is administered by the U.S. Department of the Treasury and is the most important affordable housing program in the country. Since the early 1990s, the program has helped create about 2.4 million units of affordable housing.<sup>39</sup> However, low-income housing tax credits are largely used in neighborhoods that already have substantial low-cost housing.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, they are disproportionately located near low-performing schools and schools with high rates of students receiving free and reduced-price lunch.<sup>41</sup> But many states have begun creating incentives in the qualified allocation plan, which governs the annual competition for tax credits, for developing low-income housing-tax-credit (LIHTC) housing in neighborhoods with low poverty rates and higher median incomes,

and near high-performing schools. Among 36 states reviewed in one report, “12 have QAP [qualified allocation plan] provisions with incentives for locating some LIHTC developments in high-opportunity neighborhoods. Such incentives take the form of points, basis boosts, set-asides, threshold requirements, or policy statements.”<sup>42</sup>

**CODE ENFORCEMENT.** Good housing conditions help ensure that occupants, especially children, are healthy and safe. The primary means of ensuring that housing meets health and safety standards is through the enforcement of building, health, and housing codes at the local level. Some cities, such as Dallas and Seattle, require periodic inspections of all rental units and stiff penalties for noncompliance.<sup>43</sup> Others, including New York City, provide abatement programs that give landlords of small rental properties low-interest loans to make repairs and bring their properties up to code.<sup>44</sup>

**FAIR HOUSING ACT.** The main legal tool that civil rights advocates use to encourage residential integration is the Fair Housing Act.<sup>45</sup> The statute targets individual and systemic discrimination. Examples of systemic discrimination are “exclusionary zoning,” which impedes the development of multifamily or affordable housing or both; discriminatory public housing siting decisions; and redevelopment policies that result in displacement.<sup>46</sup> The antidiscrimination provisions of the Act can generally be enforced through litigation

and administrative complaints.<sup>47</sup> Fair Housing Act violations may consist of policies and practices that have a disparate impact on protected class members in addition to intentionally discriminatory conduct.<sup>48</sup>

#### **AFFIRMATIVELY FURTHERING FAIR HOUSING.**

Courts have held that Section 808(e)(5) of the Fair Housing Act imposes a duty on U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grantees (public housing authorities, cities, and states) to “affirmatively further fair housing.”<sup>49</sup> A federal statute explicitly requires grantees of certain kinds of HUD funds to certify that they are in compliance with this duty.<sup>50</sup> Policies that comply with the duty are expected “to assist in ending discrimination and segregation, to the point where the supply of genuinely open housing increases.”<sup>51</sup> Advocates have enforced the duty to affirmatively further fair housing by filing litigation challenging HUD grantees’ certifications of compliance under the False Claims Act and by filing administrative complaints with HUD.<sup>52</sup> At a minimum, HUD grantees are required to complete an analysis of impediments to fair housing choice and to take actions to overcome these

47 For the litigation provisions, see 42 U.S.C. § 3613 (granting aggrieved persons a private right of action to enforce Fair Housing Act’s nondiscrimination provisions); § 3614 (authorizing U.S. attorney general to commence civil actions upon referral by HUD secretary and where there is pattern or practice or unlawful discrimination). For the provisions on administrative complaints, 42 U.S.C. § 3610 (establishing process for aggrieved persons to file administrative complaints alleging violations of Fair Housing Act’s nondiscrimination provisions with HUD secretary).

48 See NAACP, *Huntington Branch*, 844 F.2d 926; *Metropolitan Housing Development Corporation v. Village of Arlington Heights*, 558 F.2d 1283 (7th Cir. 1977); *United States v. City of Black Jack, Missouri*, 508 F.2d 1179 (8th Cir. 1974).

49 *Otero v. New York City Housing Authority*, 484 F.2d 1122, 1133–34 (2d Cir. 1973).

50 Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, 42 U.S.C. § 5304(b)(2).

51 *NAACP, Boston Chapter v. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development*, 817 F.2d 149, 155 (1st Cir. 1987).

52 For the former filing, see *United States ex rel. Anti-Discrimination Center of Metro New York Incorporated v. Westchester County*, 668 F. Supp. 2d 548 (S.D.N.Y. 2009). For the latter filing, see Scott Goldstein, *HUD: Dallas Affordable-Housing Practices Break Civil Rights Laws*, DALLAS MORNING NEWS, Dec. 2, 2013.

42 Khadduri, *supra* note 39, at 15.

43 *Dallas, Tex., City Code, Minimum Urban Rehabilitation Standards* §§ 27-4, 27-42 (2013); *Seattle, Wash., Municipal Code, Housing Code* § 22.214.050, 22.214.086 (2013).

44 *New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, Tax Incentives* (2014).

45 Fair Housing Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 3600-3631.

46 *NAACP, Huntington Branch v. Town of Huntington*, 844 F.2d 926 (2d Cir. 1988); *Gautreaux v. Romney*, 448 F.2d 731 (7th Cir. 1971); *Mt. Holly Gardens Citizens in Action Incorporated v. Township of Mount Holly*, 658 F.3d 375 (3d Cir. 2011).

36 Heather Schwartz, *Integrating Schools Is a Matter of Housing Policy*, in Finding Common Ground, *supra* note 33, at 15–16.

37 *Id.* at 16.

38 Schwartz, *supra* note 13, at 7.

39 Jill Khadduri, *Poverty & Race Research Action Council, Creating Balance in the Locations of LIHTC Developments: The Role of Qualified Allocation Plans* 1 (Feb. 2013).

40 *Id.* at 2.

41 Ellen & Horn, *supra* note 31, at 4, 6.

impediments.<sup>53</sup> In 2013 HUD published a proposed rule to clarify the substantive component of the duty and to revamp the process of achieving compliance.<sup>54</sup>

These tools are not exhaustive, but all have been used successfully to create more integrated, affordable, and habitable housing essential to educational opportunity.

### Case Study: Collaboration in Housing and Education

Occasionally the connections between housing and education have led to meaningful collaboration between housing and education advocates. Below is a case study highlighting the efforts of advocates in San Francisco to develop a comprehensive strategy to achieve better educational outcomes by supporting sustainable communities.

The Center for Cities and Schools, an interdisciplinary initiative between the University of California, Berkeley, Graduate School of Education and College of Environmental Design's Department of City and Regional Planning, was created to promote "high quality education as an essential component [for creating] equitable, healthy, and sustainable communities."<sup>55</sup> In an effort to promote systemic change, the Center for Cities and Schools facilitates collaborative policy-making between local government and school districts to help improve communities and public education. In 2005 it launched the Planning for Learning United for Systems-Change (PLUS) Leadership Initiative to "prepare current and future educational, community, and civic leaders in the [San Francisco] Bay Area ... to develop collaborative, mutually beneficial policies and practices, and facil-

itate comprehensive systems-change."<sup>56</sup> The initiative creates city-school teams that identify specific issues or policies and engage in project-based learning to help city, school, and community leaders understand one another's work and identify win-win solutions for their communities.<sup>57</sup> Planning for Learning United for Systems-Change participants receive technical assistance and coaching and participate in learning institutes and forums.<sup>58</sup> Currently the initiative has seven city-school teams throughout the Bay Area.<sup>59</sup>

The San Francisco city-school team includes members from the Department of Children, Youth and their Families; the Interagency Council; the Mayor's Office of Housing; San Francisco Unified School District, Mayor's Office; John Stewart Company (a developer); Malcolm X Elementary School; and HOPE SF Development partners.<sup>60</sup> After it became apparent that leaders from different agencies were unaware of one another's policies or goals, PLUS responded by educating the San Francisco Unified School District about housing dynamics and identified HOPE SF as a project on which the city-school team was to collaborate.<sup>61</sup>

HOPE SF is a "large-scale public housing revitalization project to prioritize current residents while also investing in high-quality sustainable housing and broad-scale community development."<sup>62</sup> The program aims to change devastated housing projects into vibrant neighborhoods through a one-to-one replacement of housing units to minimize displacement and help minority

communities remain in the city. In 2008 the San Francisco Unified School District and the Mayor's Office of Housing commissioned the Center for Cities and Schools to create a plan for integrating education into the revitalization plan for the first HOPE SF site, Hunters View, and effectively align housing policies and school reform.<sup>63</sup> In 2011 HOPE SF created the Education Task Force to help ensure the quality of schools in all future HOPE SF sites and maintain a clear and consistent collaboration across sectors.<sup>64</sup> Members of the task force include the San Francisco Unified School District, the Department of Children, Youth and their Families, the San Francisco Housing Authority, community members, nonprofit organizations, and developers.<sup>65</sup>

Since its inception, the PLUS city-school team has been able to create and sustain a relationship between the Mayor's Office of Housing and the San Francisco Unified School District by reducing information gaps across sectors and creating opportunities for meaningful collaboration. As a result, educators, education reformers, the San Francisco Unified School District, and families are now essential to the realization of HOPE SF's mission to revitalize depressed communities and increase opportunities for youth.

### A Vision for Collaboration

While the case study illustrates the potential for a collaborative approach to improving education through housing, more of these efforts are needed. Strategic collaboration must anticipate and meet challenges, but it does not have to be complicated.

One vision (and there are many possibilities, to be sure) is simply this: integrate education equity as a priority in housing advocacy. Housing policy is education poli-

53 See 24 C.F.R. §§ 91.325 & 570.601 (2013).

54 *Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing*, 78 Fed. Reg. 43710 (proposed July 19, 2013) (to be codified at 24 C.F.R. pts. 5, 91, 92, 570, 574, 576, 903).

55 Deborah L. McKoy & Ariel H. Bierbaum, *Center for Cities and Schools, PLUS Leadership Initiative: Final Report 2* (Fall 2012); *Center for Cities and Schools, University of California, Berkeley* (2013).

56 McKoy & Bierbaum, *supra* note 55, at 2.

57 *Id.* at 4.

58 See Deborah L. McKoy et al., *What Works Collaborative, Center for Cities and Schools, Opportunity-Rich Schools and Sustainable Communities: Seven Steps to Align High-Quality Education with Innovations in City and Metropolitan Planning and Development* 48 (June 2011).

59 *Center for Cities and Schools, University of California, Berkeley, PLUS Leadership Initiative* (2013).

60 McKoy & Bierbaum, *supra* note 55, at 38.

61 *Id.* at 38–39.

62 *HOPE SF, About HOPE SF* (2013).

63 McKoy & Bierbaum, *supra* note 55, at 39–40; McKoy et al., *supra* note 58, at 48.

64 *HOPE SF, Invest: The Campaign for HOPE SF* (2013); McKoy et al., *supra* note 58, at 48.

65 HOPE SF, *supra* note 64.

cy. Of course, this requires active outreach, mutual education, meetings, identifying and developing a campaign, patience, and diligence. Inviting education voices to city council and state legislature hearings, city planning commission meetings, and community forums will inform the conversation and lend credibility to the campaign. Ordinarily these decision-making bodies hear from homogeneous coalitions of housing lawyers, policy advocates, organizers, developers, and sometimes tenants. Rarely, if ever, do they hear from teachers, parents, principals, superintendents, students, or education lawyers.

The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights recently started to think about how to bring these fields together, beginning internally with its education, community development, and fair housing lawyers and extending the collaboration into the community. Below are some planned next steps:

- Identify a community where a collaborative campaign is ripe or possible and where there are existing relationships in education or housing or both. The Lawyers' Committee's housing and education teams are particularly active in New Orleans, the District of Columbia, and Baltimore.
- Deepen existing—and build new—relationships between education and housing advocates, including community organizers, policy advocates, and attorneys as well as educators, administrators, parents, students, and tenants.
- Plan and convene a series of roundtables with all of these stakeholders to (1) educate one another about the issues and strategies in both fields, (2) discuss the connections between housing and education, (3) convey the importance of education folks lending their voices to housing advocacy, (4) describe current and possible efforts and campaigns and (5) agree on a campaign on which

to collaborate. Campaigns may include efforts to pass an inclusionary zoning policy, to end discrimination against voucher holders, or to improve the conditions of rental housing, for instance.

- Build a coalition that includes education and housing stakeholders and speaks with one voice.
- Develop a strategy that meaningfully engages both education and housing stakeholders in the campaign, including research, messaging, communications, community education, community organizing, and lobbying.
- Implement the strategy and adapt as necessary.
- Document the campaign in order to share best practices and lessons learned with other collaborations.

Housing advocates and education advocates have separately made great progress over the last few decades. But our schools continue to be segregated, and our low-income children of color continue to lag behind their more affluent and white counterparts. Segregation, unaffordable housing, and poor-quality housing are not the only barriers to a child's educational opportunities and performance, but these factors significantly have an impact on a child's access to good neighborhood schools and the child's ability to learn. Schools will remain segregated as long as our communities do. Let us envision a more effective way to create more housing choice, more diverse communities and schools, and a better education for our children by bridging silos and working together. And let us not be afraid to try simply because it might be hard—the stakes are too high.

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#### DAVID ZISSER

*Former Counsel, Fair Housing and Community Development Project*

#### BRENDA SHUM

*Director of Educational Opportunities Project*

Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law  
1401 New York Ave. NW Suite 400  
Washington, DC 20005

202.662.8600

[dzisser@publicadvocates.org](mailto:dzisser@publicadvocates.org)

[bshum@lawyerscommittee.org](mailto:bshum@lawyerscommittee.org)



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