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2017

Policies Promoting Regional Schools with a Focus on Equity, Diversity and Innovation

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VCU L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs

Office of Public Policy Outreach

Translational Research Fellows Issue Brief

Policies Promoting Regional Schools with a Focus on Equity, Diversity and Innovation

Overview/Issue:

- Racial diversity in schools results in long-term social and academic benefits, including reduced neighborhood, college, and workplace segregation, higher levels of social cohesion, a reduced likelihood of racial prejudice, and the development of skills to navigate and find comfort in racially diverse settings. (H.R.5738 - Stronger Together School Diversity Act of 2016)
- The main purpose of contemporary educational regionalism is to emphasize connectivity, and the importance of overcoming racial, linguistic and social class boundaries as well as geographic boundaries. (6)
- By forming high quality educational communities where children from different walks of life learn with and from one another on equal footing is a central goal of school desegregation.
- Corresponding and well-designed school desegregation policy is necessary to achieve widespread integration of students. (Hawley, 2014)

Policy Recommendations:

1. Propose a study of demographic change across major metropolitan areas.
Why: This would allow identification of areas that need diversification.
2. Consolidate services provided by school districts
Why: This would bring a more diverse group of individuals together and keep costs at an attainable rate.
3. On the relationship of housing and access to education, some argue that subsidized efforts to supply housing for low-income families should be driven by school opportunities. Non-concentrated location proposals for housing and plans for new diverse income communities ought to prioritize closeness to high-opportunity schools which offer reasonable paths to higher education. Equally, Section 8 and the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit should be disbursed in ways that promote affordable housing in high-opportunity areas, attached to high-opportunity schools, throughout a region. Moreover, all new developments in metropolitan areas should be required to provide a certain share of affordable housing.

Conclusions/Implications:

- These findings suggest that racially and socio-economically diverse schools can bring higher student achievement and ensure better outcomes for lower income and minority students.
- By creating diverse school environments, students from a young age are less likely to form racial stereotypes and more likely to seek out integrated environments in the future.

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