

SEGREGATED SCHOOLS IN INTEGRATED NEIGHBORHOODS:

THE CITY'S SCHOOLS ARE EVEN MORE DIVIDED THAN OUR HOUSING



BY CLARA HEMPHILL AND NICOLE MADER

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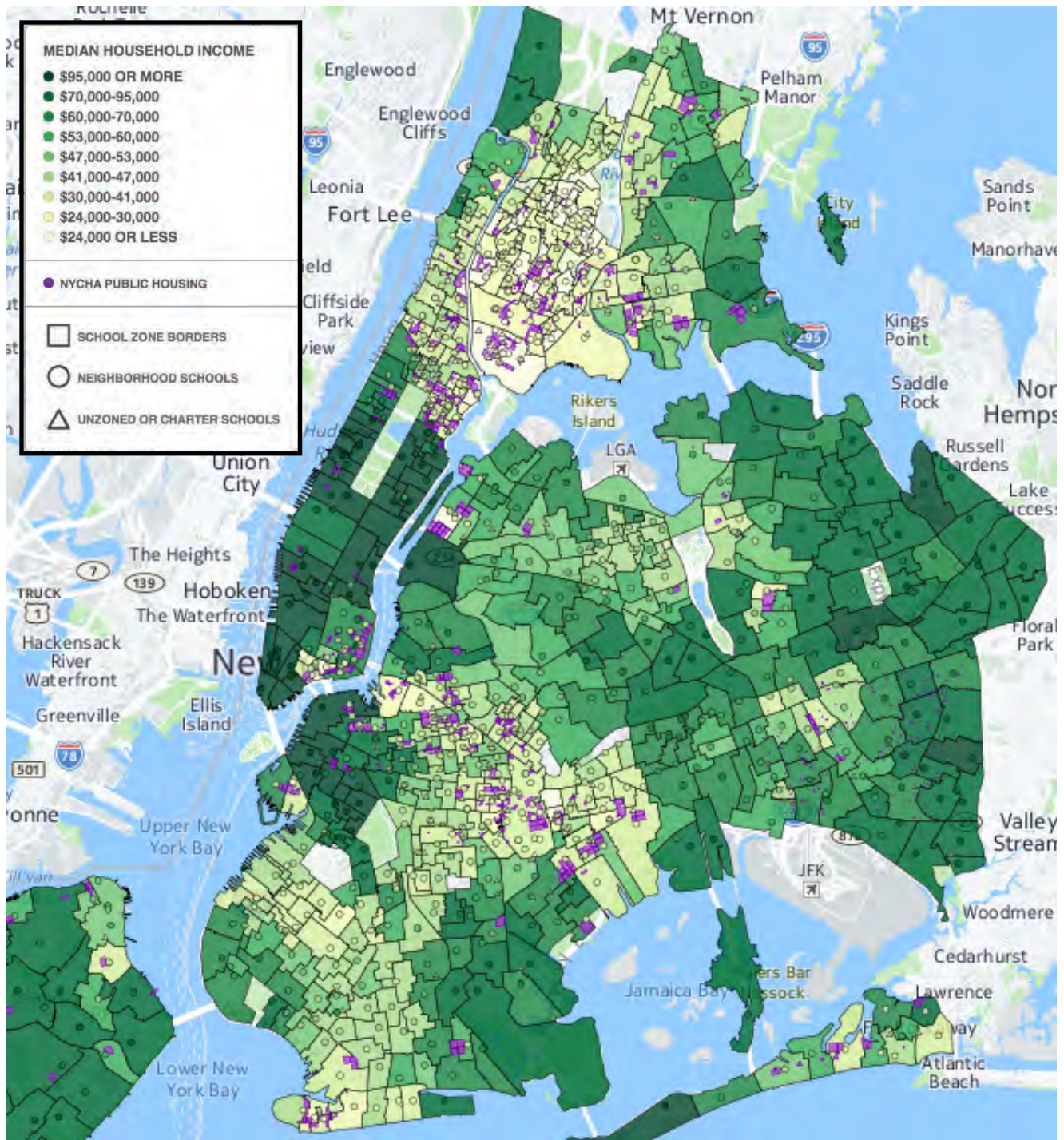
In multi-ethnic New York City, why are so many elementary schools segregated by race and class? For years, school officials and researchers have assumed that school segregation merely reflects segregated housing patterns—because most children attend their zoned neighborhood schools.[i]

However, new research by The New School's Center for New York City Affairs demonstrates that school segregation is not always the result of housing patterns. In fact, as these maps show, there are dozens of high-poverty elementary schools that serve mostly black and Latino children that are located in far more racially and economically mixed neighborhoods.

This is not to minimize the impact of housing segregation. Large swaths of the city have high concentrations of poverty. Many high-poverty neighborhoods are overwhelming black and Latino. Student enrollment in hundreds of schools reflects that reality. But these maps also demonstrate that the city's schools are even more economically and racially segregated than the neighborhoods – and for economically disadvantaged students, that usually translates to inferior education.

Figure 1 shows the household income of children attending each of the city's elementary schools (indicated by the colored circles for neighborhood schools, triangles for charters and other schools of choice). School income is then compared to that of people living in each school's attendance zone (whose boundaries are marked in black), based on median household income estimates from the most recent American Community Survey.[ii] Charter schools and other schools of choice that do not have attendance zones are compared to the geographic area from which they admit students, usually a district.

Figure 1: Estimated Income of NYC Students and Zones



See Appendix 1 for detail images of each borough, or access the interactive version of this map at centernyc.org/segregatedschools. There you can click any school to view more information about its students and zone, or link to its insideschools.org profile.

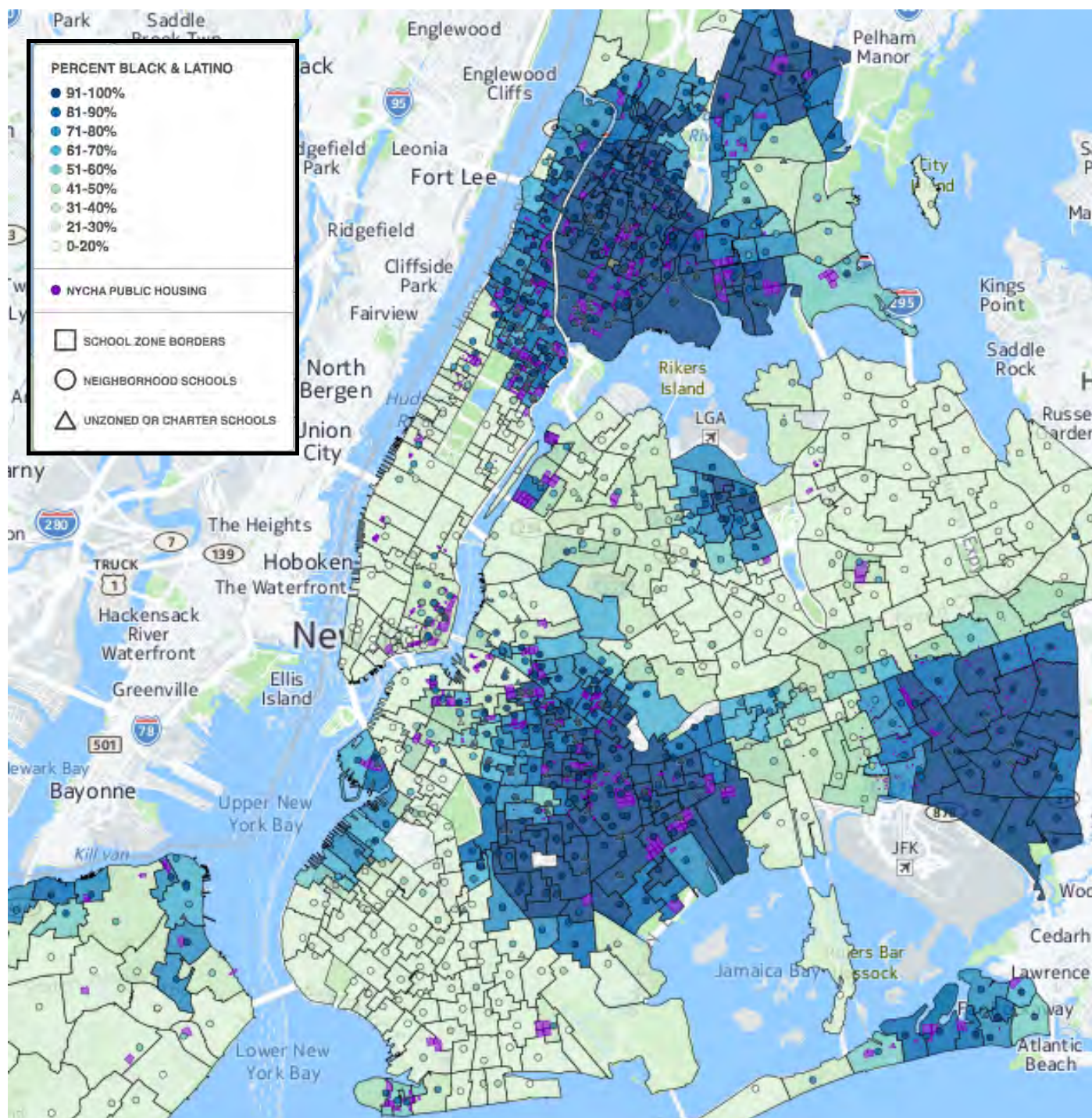
Our analysis found that 124 of the city's 734 neighborhood elementary schools^[iii]—schools with a total enrollment of 62,607 students—are substantially poorer than their school zones. For these schools, the estimated household income of the zone is at least 20 percent higher than the estimated household income of the children enrolled. (These schools appear on the map as circles that are lighter green than their surrounding zones.)

Figure 2 shows both the racial makeup of the students in each school and of the people living in each school attendance zone, based on data from the City's Department of Education (DOE) and the American Community Survey. Circles and triangles shaded dark blue have high proportions of black and Latino students just as dark blue geographic areas indicate high proportions of black and Latino residents in school zones; those in light blue, lower proportions.

Some 332 of the city's 734 neighborhood elementary schools have enrollments that are more than 90 percent black and Latino. Most of these are in neighborhoods that are also predominantly black and Latino. Nonetheless, we found 59 schools with enrollments of more than 90 percent black and Latino students in neighborhoods that are more racially mixed, that is, neighborhoods that are less than 80 percent black and Latino. These schools have a combined enrollment of 28,175 children.

Our analysis found the sharpest discrepancies between the demographics of schools and their attendance zones in District 3 on the Upper West Side, District 5 in Harlem, and District 13 in downtown Brooklyn—neighborhoods which have undergone gentrification and where public housing sometimes abuts luxury high-rise apartment buildings or high-priced brownstones. For a detailed description of our methodology and a link to our data for each school, see Appendix 2.

Figure 2: Racial Makeup of NYC Students and Zones



See Appendix 1 for detail images of each borough, or access the interactive version of this map at centernyc.org/segregatedschools. There you can click any school to view more information about its students and zone, or link to its insideschools.org profile.

WHY INTEGRATION MATTERS

Decades of academic research suggest that socio-economic integration is one of the most effective and inexpensive ways to improve academic achievement for poor children.[iv] That's because high-poverty schools tend to have fewer resources. They have trouble attracting and retaining qualified teachers. Moreover, teachers in high-poverty schools are more likely to have low expectations of their pupils, and to subject them to rote teaching that focuses on basic skills, says Douglas Ready, a researcher at Teachers College, Columbia University. Peer effects matter, too. The 1966 Coleman report said the educational resources provided by a child's fellow students are more important than the resources provided by the school.[v] Parents also make a difference: higher-income parents have the political clout to demand better resources for their children.

CONCLUSION

An analysis of these maps suggests that many parents, dissatisfied with their neighborhood schools, vote with their feet and send their children to public gifted programs, schools of choice, charter schools, or private schools. It follows that some racial and economic integration can be achieved without changing zone lines or assigning kids to schools outside their neighborhoods—measures which are often politically fraught. The key is to find ways to encourage more middle-class parents who live in economically mixed neighborhoods (or white and Asian parents living in racially mixed neighborhoods) to send their children to the neighborhood schools—while ensuring that lower income children also receive the education they deserve.

These maps are the first product of a multi-year research project, begun in July 2015, analyzing the causes of racial and economic segregation in the city's elementary schools. Over the next 18 months, we plan to identify schools that were once highly segregated and are now integrated to see what lessons might be learned. We will also visit some of the city's segregated schools in integrated neighborhoods to suggest ways in which they might become integrated.

We will also identify schools in high-poverty neighborhoods that attract a mix of middle class and poor children. These schools, which include charters, magnets, and other schools of choice as well as some popular zoned schools, show that some degree of socio-economic diversity is possible even in poor neighborhoods. They may provide useful lessons.

We plan to analyze various proposals to foster school integration, including “controlled choice,” set-asides for low-income children at very popular schools, the expansion of dual-language programs, magnet schools, and changes to school attendance zones.

To be sure, not all integrated schools are high quality; and some highly segregated schools manage, despite obstacles, to offer their pupils a good education. Nonetheless, integration offers a time-tested, inexpensive route to school improvement. As a first step, the DOE should work to ensure that there are no segregated schools in integrated neighborhoods.

APPENDIX 1: Borough Details of School and Zone Maps

Figure 3: Estimated Income of Manhattan Students and Zones

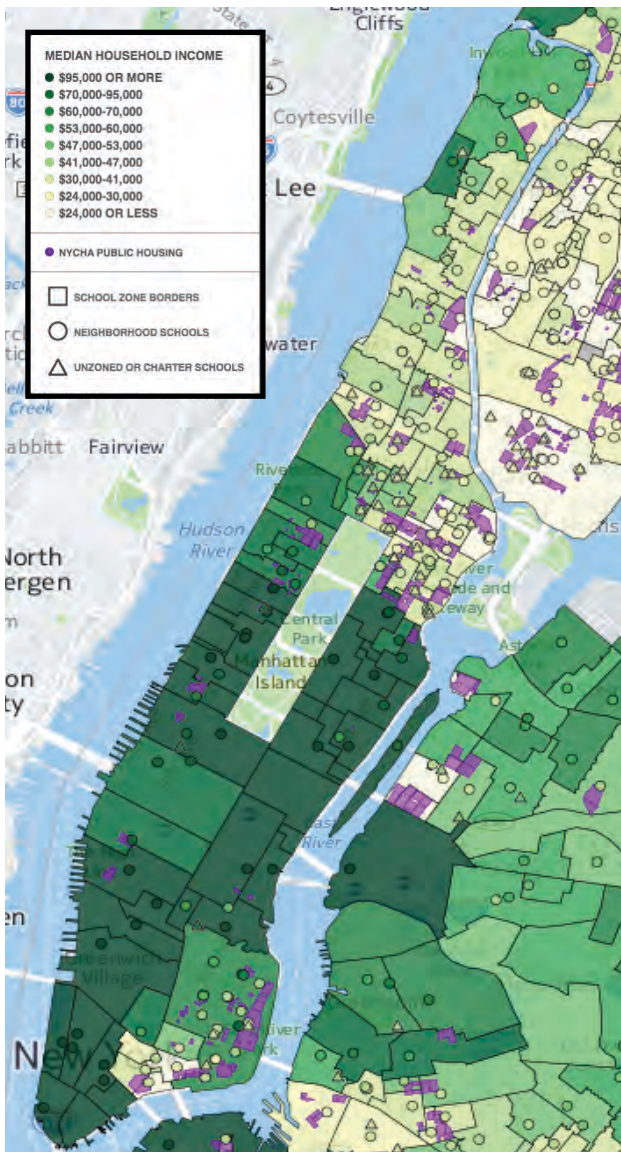
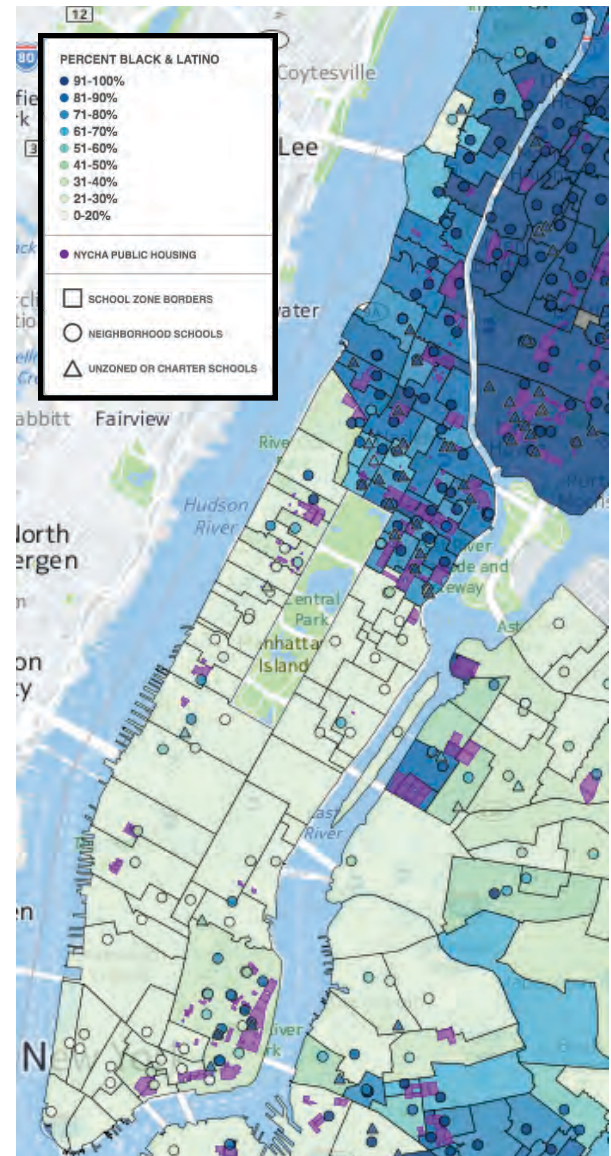


Figure 4: Racial Makeup of Manhattan Students and Zones



Manhattan is home to several of the wealthiest and whitest school zones in the city, yet a surprisingly large of its schools remain predominately low-income, black and Latino. In District 3 on the Upper West Side, for example, the estimated household income of children enrolled at PS 191 is barely half that of all households in the school zone. PS 191’s pupils are 80 percent black and Latino; the zone, just 21 percent. Similarly, in District 5 in Harlem, the estimated household income of children enrolled at PS 125 is barely half that of all the households in the school zone. PS 125’s pupils are 84 percent black and Latino; the zone is just 37 percent.

Figure 5: Estimated Income of Bronx Students and Zones

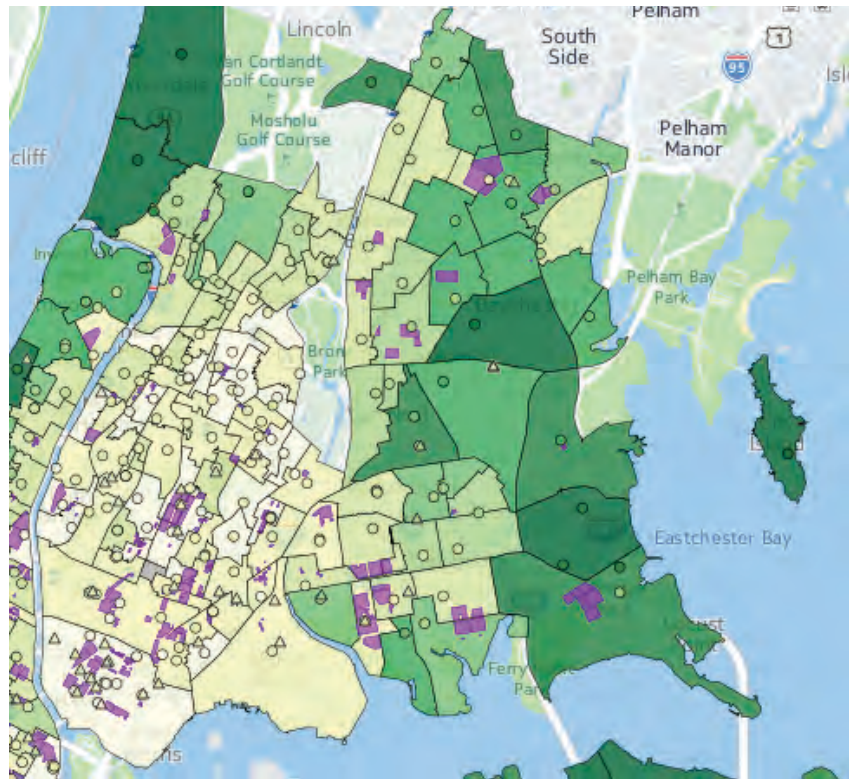
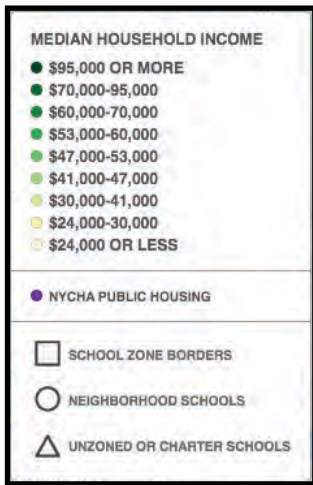
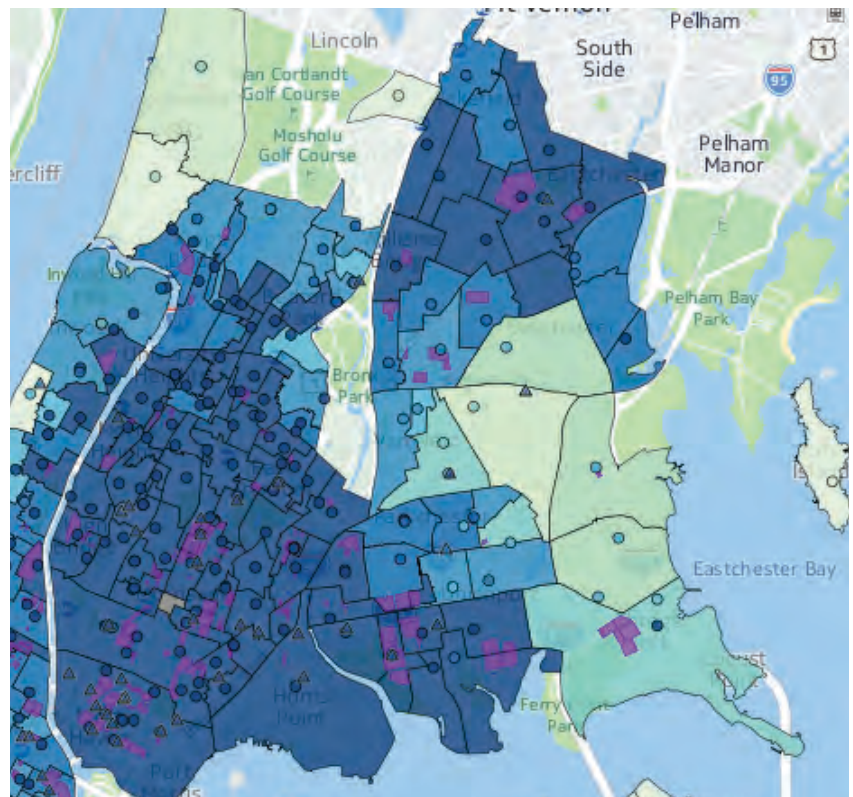
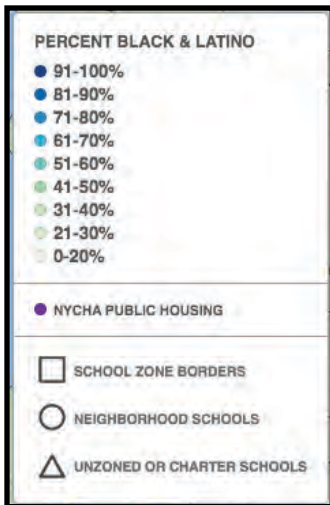


Figure 6: Racial Makeup of Bronx Students and Zones



More than three-quarters of the Bronx's elementary schools have more than 90% black and Latino students, all of which have estimated school incomes below the citywide median household income. Even in the higher-income neighborhoods in the northern parts of the Bronx, the schools have more students who are black and Latino and from lower-income census tracts than the zones in which they are located.

Figure 7: Estimated Income of Queens Students and Zones

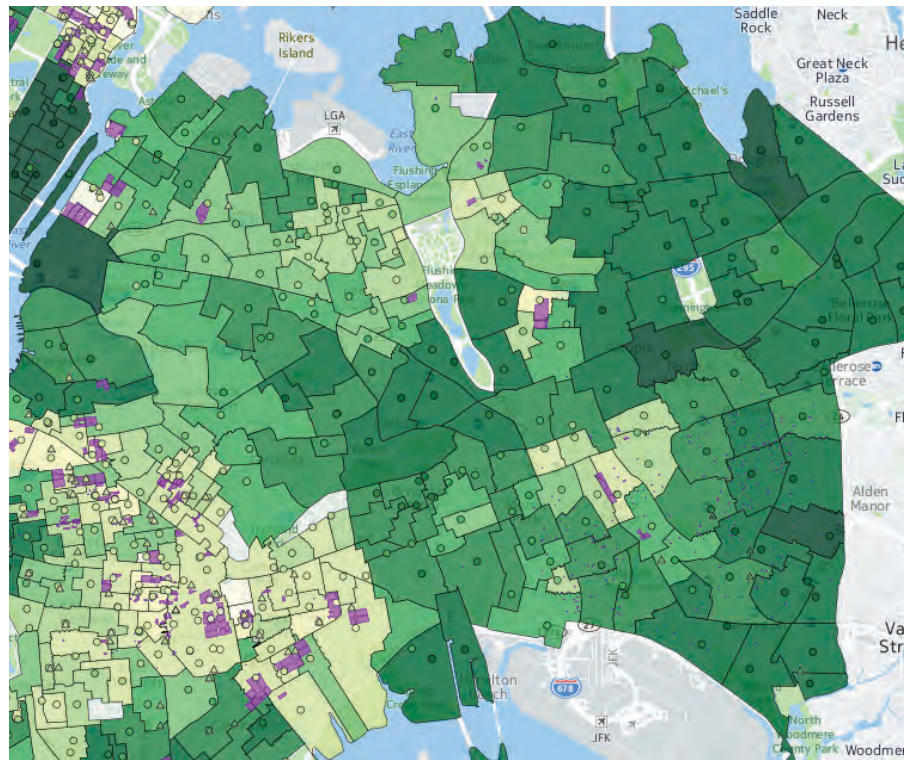
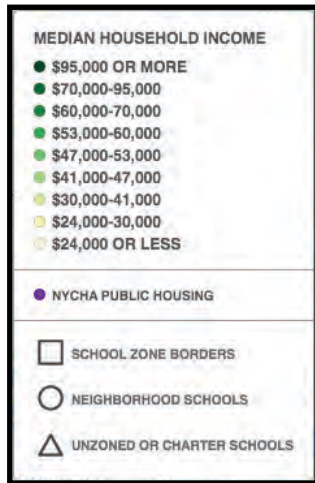
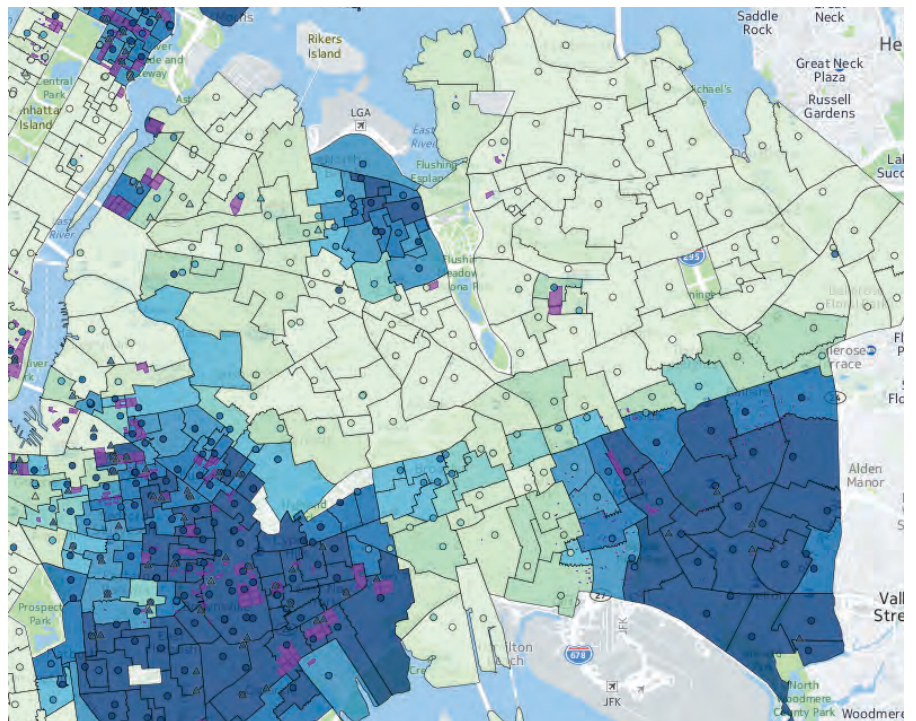
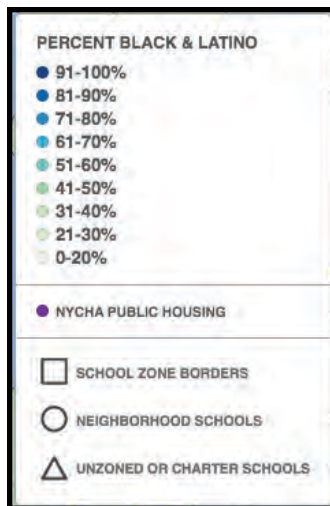


Figure 8: Racial Makeup of Queens Students and Zones



Queens is known as the most ethnically diverse county in the entire country. Although these maps paint that rich diversity with a broad brush, they also indicate that school segregation by race in Queens is largely a factor of residential segregation. With the exception of a few schools like the Elm Tree School in Elmhurst, which is 94% black and Latino in a zone that is 51%, most of the schools match the income estimates and demographics of their zones

Figure 9: Estimated Income of Brooklyn Students and Zones

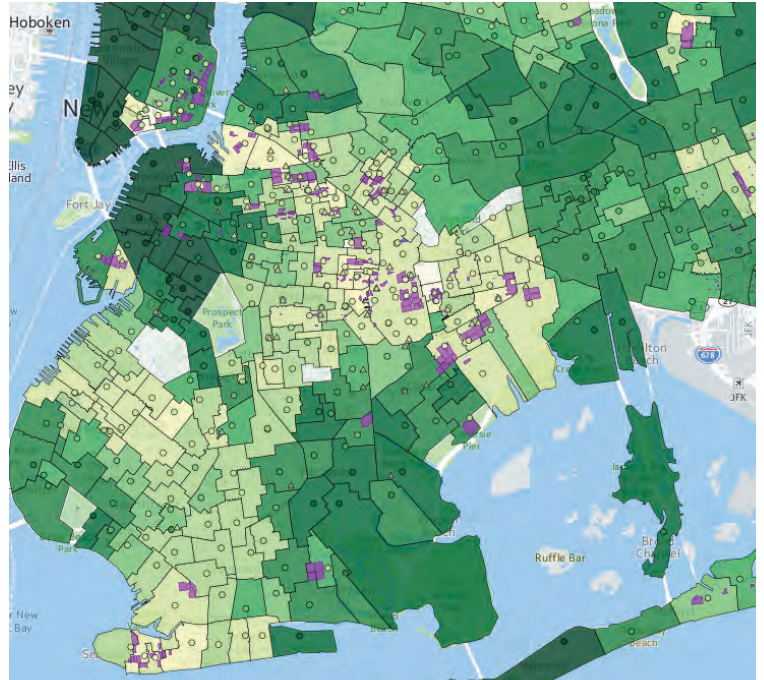
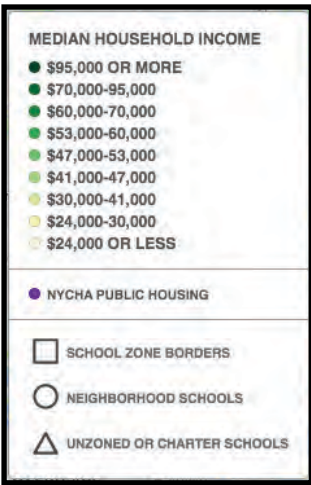
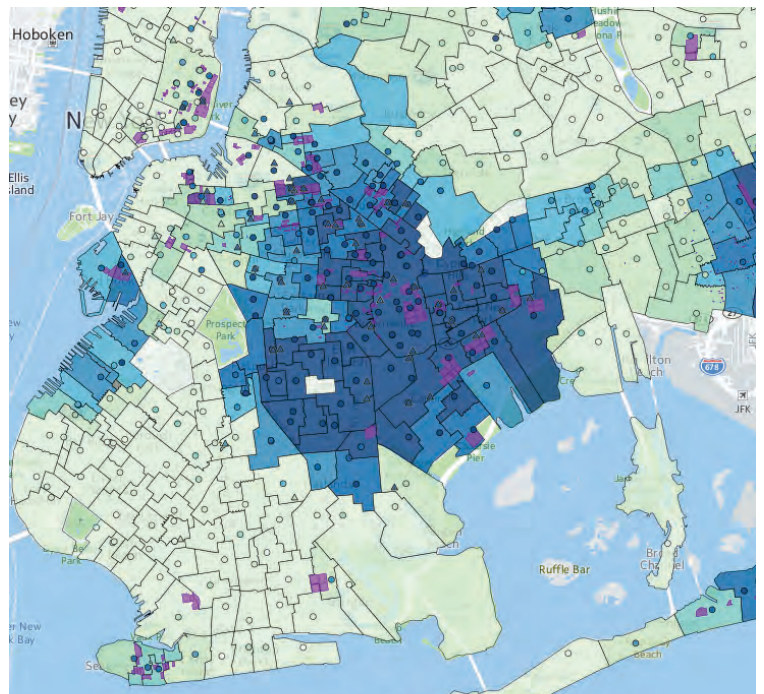
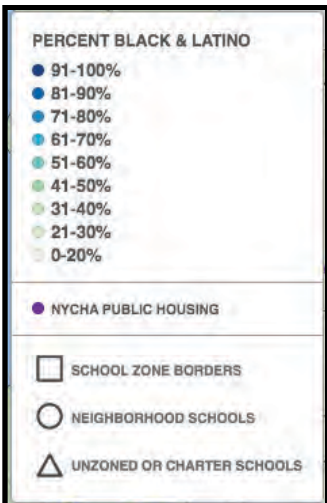


Figure 10: Racial Makeup of Brooklyn Students and Zones



A borough experiencing rapid neighborhood change, Brooklyn is also home to some of the highest contrasts between zones and schools in the city. In District 13 in downtown Brooklyn the estimated household income of children enrolled at PS 287 is less than half that of all households in the school zone. The school enrollment is 89 percent black and Latino; the zone is just 43 percent black and Latino. PS 282, also in District 13 in the heart of Park Slope, is 85% black and Latino in a zone that is only 30%.

Figure 11: Estimated Income of Staten Island Students and Zones

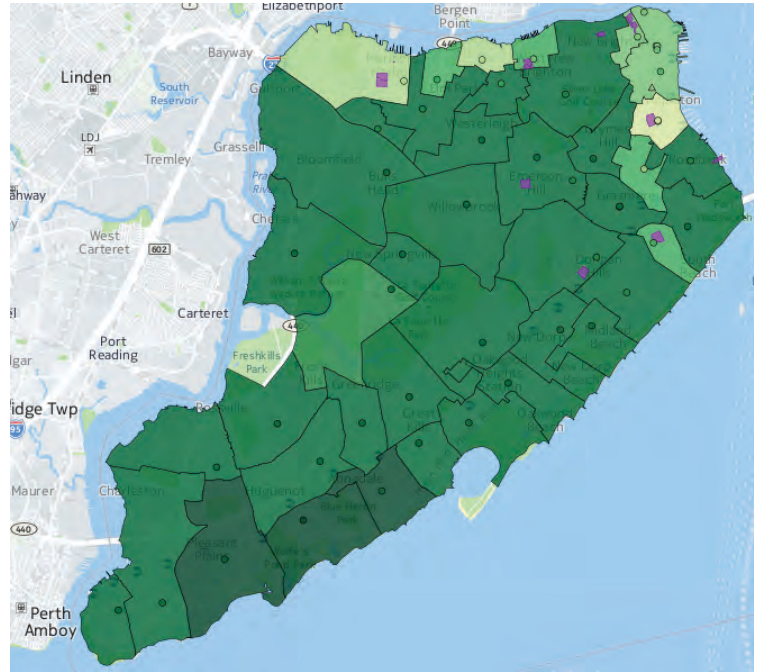
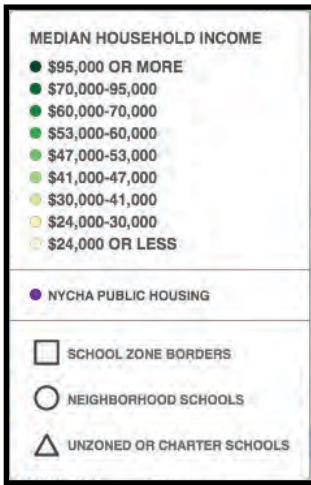
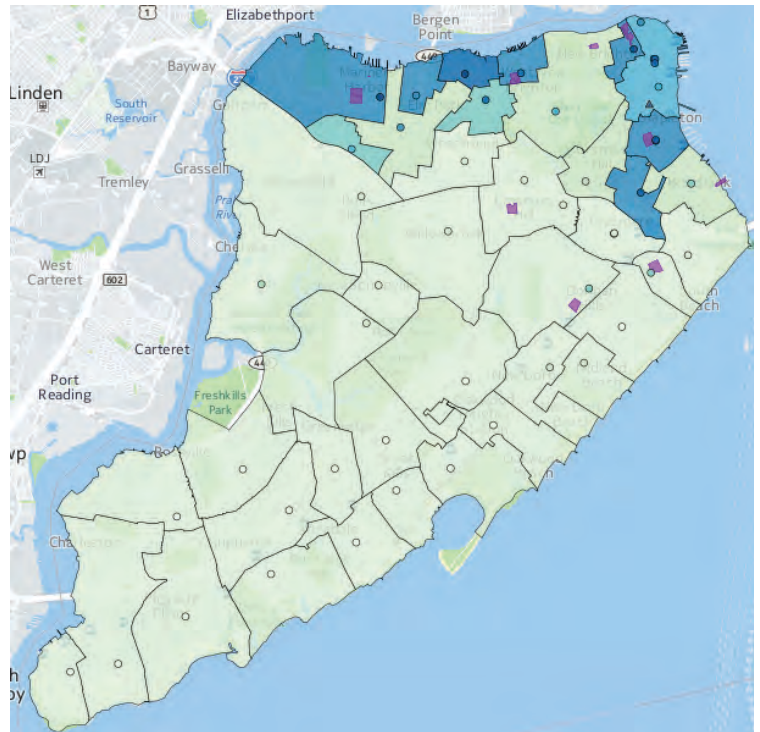
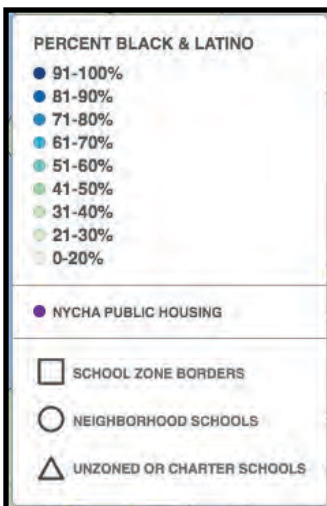


Figure 10: Racial Makeup of Staten Island Students and Zones



While the income estimates of most Staten Island's school match those of their zones, some disparity can be seen in the racial makeup of schools along the North Shore. At PS 45 and PS 22, for example, the proportion of black and Latino students in the school is twice that of the zone.

APPENDIX 2: Methodology

The methodology for this analysis was made possible by newly available data from the DOE matching each student in the city to the Census tract in which he or she lives. Following a method used by the Independent Budget Office, we based our analysis on the estimated median household income of each student's census tract of residence from the American Community Survey.^[vi] Although this estimate does not capture the exact income of any particular student's household, it does reflect the typical household in each student's community and the context in which each student lives. This improves upon traditional measures of student socioeconomic status, such as eligibility for free or reduced lunch, because it can be used to describe students at all points across the socioeconomic spectrum, not just students below a particular threshold. School estimates were derived by averaging the income estimates of each student who attended the school in the 2014-15 school year.

The estimated income for each zone was determined by aggregating the median household incomes of each Census block group that falls within each school attendance zone. Because the block group borders do not match perfectly with school zone borders, we matched each block group to a zone using a population-weighted geographic center point of each block group.

The possibility that the sample estimate does not reflect the population as a whole must be considered when using any ACS estimate. To account for this, we calculated the percent of sampling error associated with each estimate, known as the coefficient of variation (CV) from the published margins of error. U.S. Census Bureau guidance recommends that any estimates with a CV greater than 30 percent should be "used with caution." We excluded all such estimates from our analysis, as well as any estimates for which a margin of error was not published, such as median income estimates that were capped at \$250,000.

Out of the 1,098,064 students with valid matches to 2,144 of the city's 2,167 Census tracts, 98.5 percent had median household income estimates with reliable CVs. We considered using other income estimates of families or families with children only, instead of all households, but the smaller sample size of these subgroups led to higher CVs, and thus would have forced us to reject much more of the data. A possible limitation of this approach: Our income estimates of all households may not reflect the incomes of families with school-age children.

Because we aggregated this data to the school level, we also rejected any school for which less than two-thirds of its students' income data was reliable. Out of the 939 schools serving elementary students in the 2014-15 school year (including charters and other schools of choice but excluding District 75 schools), six were rejected for this reason.

Determining the racial composition of each school was more straightforward: the DOE publishes the number of students identified as black, Latino, white, Asian, and "other" races for each school each year in their Demographic Snapshot. To compare each school's racial composition to that of its zone, we again relied on the center point of each Census block group to estimate the total population of each racial group within each school zone. Because the Census collects more detailed information than the DOE does on racial affiliations, we combined several categories to match the DOE's "other" category, including Native American, Pacific Islander, and individuals of two or more races.

To permit easy comparisons of multiple schools, a full list of the schools, their demographics, and the demographics of their school zones is available for [download here](#).

ENDNOTES

[i] As early as 1958, the city's Board of Education said it could not "correct the situations created by segregated housing." See: *Crossing Broadway: Washington Heights and the Promise of New York City*, Robert W. Snyder, Cornell University Press, 2015, p. 79. See also: *110 Livingston Street: Politics and Bureaucracy in the New York City School System*, David Rogers, Percheron Press, 2006. As recently as 2014, a report on segregation in New York by John Kucsera and Gary Orfield at the UCLA Civil Rights Project stated: "Schools with mostly zoned students generally reflect neighborhood segregation patterns."

[ii] The 2010-2014 American Community Survey is conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, which surveys a sample of the population over the course of five years to improve the accuracy of their estimates even in small geographic areas. Income estimates reflect each household's pre-tax income for the preceding 12 months and were adjusted for inflation to 2014 dollars.

[iii] This includes schools in Districts 1, 7, and 23. Parents in these districts may choose any school in the district. Because they do not have attendance zones, these schools' demographic composition was compared to that in their districts as a whole.

[iv] *The Future of School Integration*, The Century Foundation, Richard Kahlenberg, editor, 2012, p.1

[v] *Integrating Schools in a Changing Society*, Erica Frankenberg and Elizabeth deBray, University of North Carolina Press, 2011, pp 92-94.

[vi] *Beyond Meal Status: A New Measure for Quantifying Poverty Levels in the City's Schools*, New York City Independent Budget Office, October 2015