

# Socioeconomic and Racial School Integration

“Passing the Torch: The Past, Present and  
Future of Inter-district School  
Desegregation”

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# Racial and Economic Integration

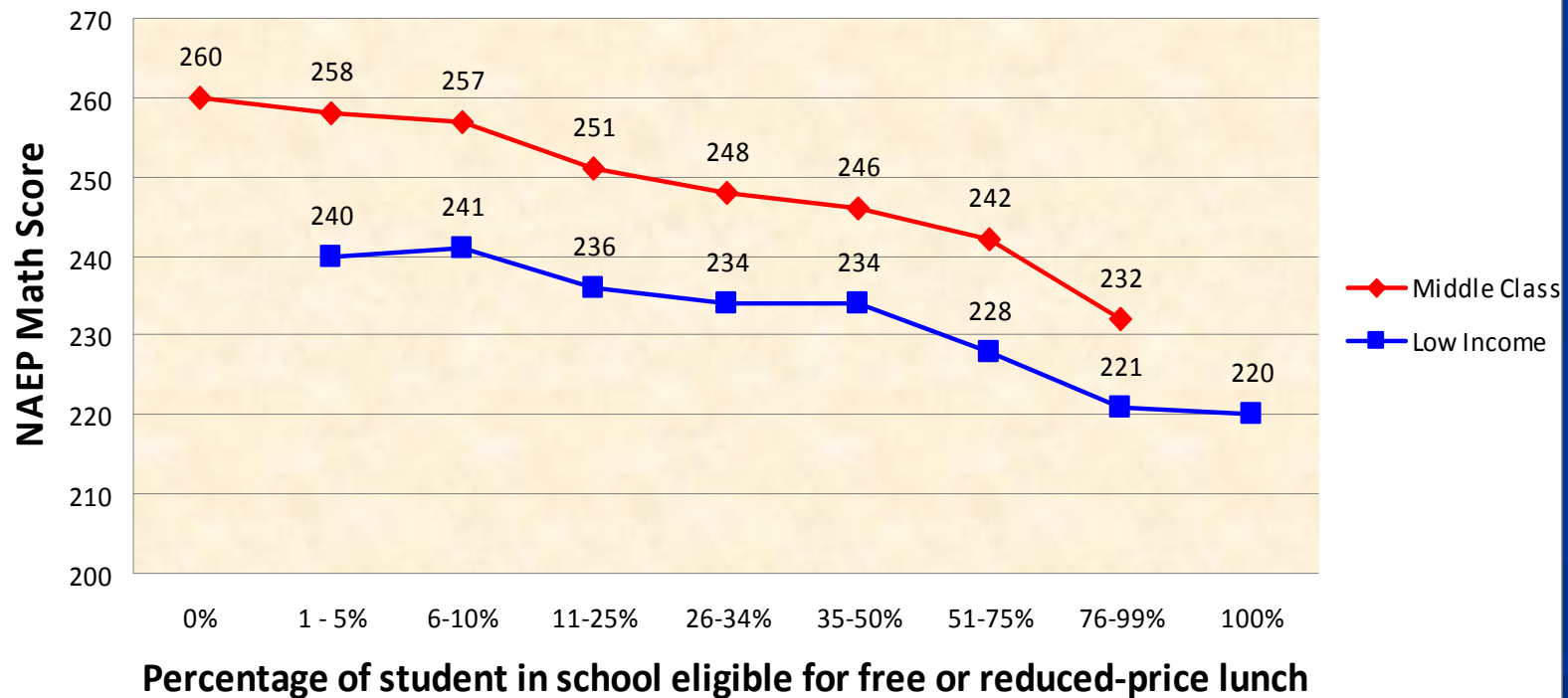
## Both Important

- Racial integration important for fostering tolerant citizens and social cohesion in a democracy
- Socioeconomic integration critical to improving academic achievement.

# Academic Benefits of Socioeconomic Integration

- Not just a clumsy proxy. Research: Academic benefits of integration not from proximity to whiteness but middle-class environment
- Racial Desegregation in Charlotte vs. Boston (1970s)
- Roosevelt Perry Elementary in Louisville.
- Behaviors Associated with Class more than Race: Discipline problems; “acting white” actually a class phenomenon; parental involvement etc.

# Student's NAEP Math Scores, by Type of School



Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessments of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2007 Math Assessment, Grade 4.

# Districts Pursuing Socioeconomic Integration

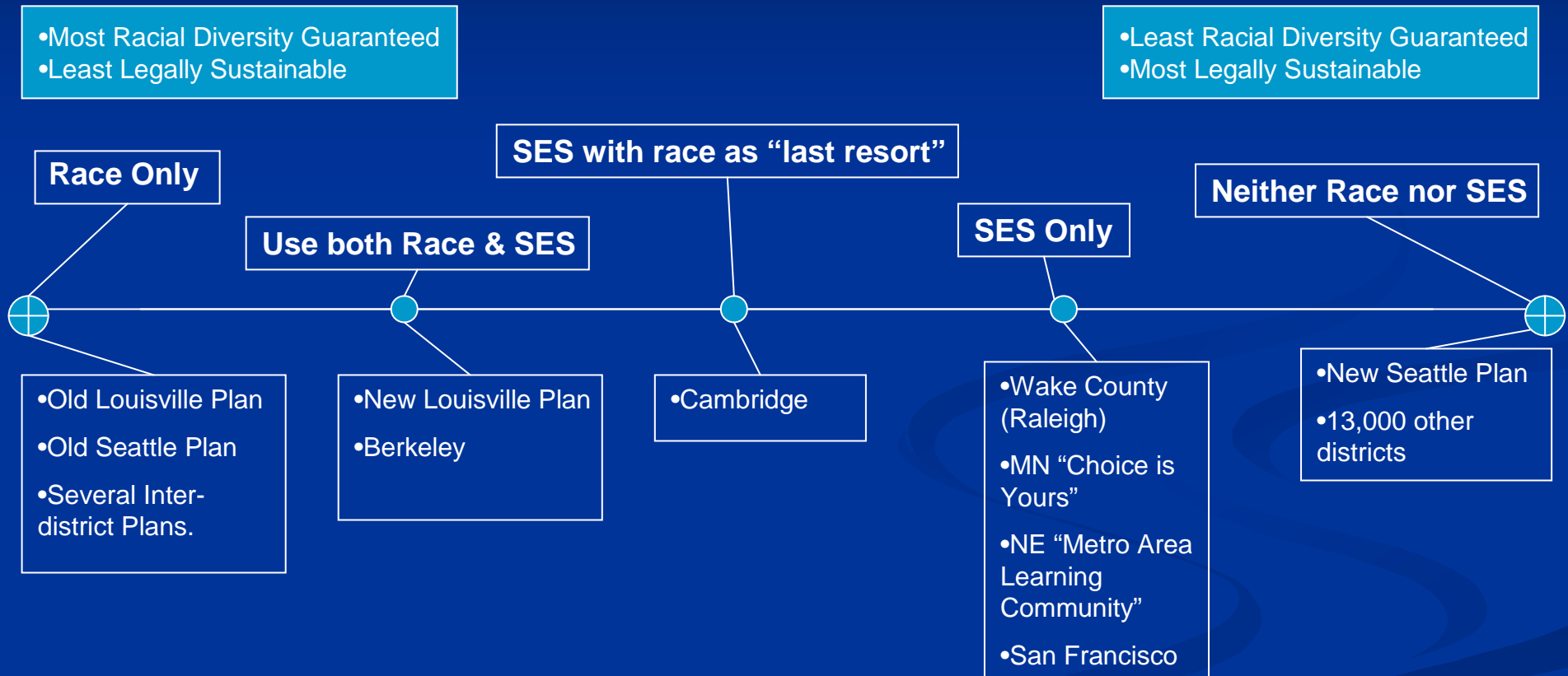
- 60 U.S. Districts using socioeconomic status as a factor in student assignment. Examples:
- Wake County, (Raleigh) North Carolina. No school should have more than 40% of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch or 25% performing below grade level.
- Cambridge, Massachusetts. All schools should fall within + or – 10 percentage points of district average for free and reduced price lunch (40%).
- La Crosse, Wisconsin. All schools should have between 15% and 45% of students eligible for free lunch.

# Racial Dividend of Socioeconomic Integration

Can indirectly produce some racial diversity in a manner that is perfectly legal. (E.g. Progressive Income Tax)

- \* Among 4<sup>th</sup> graders nationally, 24% whites eligible free and reduced lunch; 70% African Americans; 73% Latinos
- \* Wake went from 64.6% integrated using race to 63.3% integrated using class.
- \* But Sean Reardon's research: no guarantee, so how to combine race and socioeconomic status?

# Voluntary School Integration Continuum of School Districts



# Public School Choice using Census Data on Socioeconomic Status

- Examples: Louisville, Berkeley
- Advantages:
  - \* Insulate legally
  - \* Larger racial dividend. Connection between race and concentrated poverty stronger than family race and poverty
  - \* More sophisticated data available so can do quartiles instead of binary.



# Public School Choice using Individualized Data (Free Lunch etc)

- Examples: Cambridge, San Francisco
- Advantages:
  - \* No outliers (rich family living in poor area)
  - \* Current data (not 10 year old census data)

# Integration and NCLB Transfer Provisions

- Allow cross-district transfers for low-income students in failing schools
- Financial incentives for middle-class schools to recruit low income transfer students (especially attractive in economic meltdown)
- Temporary relief from NCLB accountability provisions for transfer students
- Increase urban magnet school funding so movement flows in both directions

# Consortium on Socioeconomic and Racial Integration

- Century Foundation/Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights (John Brittain)/Charles Willie & Michael Alves
- Share Best Practices
- Commission Research on Educational Outcomes

# For More Information

- Richard D. Kahlenberg, *All Together Now: Creating Middle Class Schools through Public School Choice* (Brookings Press, 2001; paperback, 2003).
- *Divided We Fail: Coming Together through Public School Choice: Report of The Century Foundation Task Force on the Common School* (Lowell Weicker, Chair) (Century Foundation Press, 2002).
- Jennifer Jellison Holme and Amy Stuart Wells chapter in *Improving on No Child Left Behind*, ed. by Richard D. Kahlenberg (Century Foundation, 2008).

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