



## Providence, RI

JULY 2020

Creating Loving Systems Across Communities to  
Provide All Students an Opportunity to Thrive



Learn more and see the full report:  
[www.lovingcities.org](http://www.lovingcities.org)

PREFACE

# Leaning into the Arc

Dr. John H. Jackson  
*President & CEO,  
 Schott Foundation for Public Education*

In 1853, Unitarian minister Theodore Parker wrote a sermon calling for the abolition of slavery titled, “Of Justice and the Conscience,” that contained a line that would go on to be figuratively quoted by ministers, rabbis, presidents, social justice leaders and ultimately, during a turbulent time in our country, flow from the pen of Dr. Martin Luther King in 1958: *The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.*

At America’s core is a nation birthed from colonies to cities with a vision of increased opportunity, democracy and love for all mankind — but also a nation that distorted that vision by using the instruments of violence and oppression over humanity. That oppression metastasized into inequities and racism that spread through every organ of America’s system, including healthcare, education, employment, and policing, and into communities across the nation.

America’s mercurial journey on the moral arc should tell us about the length and rigidity of the arc and that bending that arc towards justice doesn’t occur in lukewarm climates nor because of natural winds. Like steel, which bends best under heat, justice requires intentional moments of confrontation, protest and critical assessments.

In 2018, the Schott Foundation launched the Loving Cities Index to provide a community-informed assessment tool to determine the degree to which city



Photo by Joe Piette

systems were actually addressing their institutional inequities by providing the care, capacity, commitment and stability needed for children and families to thrive regardless of race or ethnicity. Recognizing that systemic racism is institutionalized lovelessness, the Loving Cities Index highlighted the degree to which local leaders were eliminating the policies and practices which led to racial disparities in access to the critical supports (health, transportation, financial, etc.) that too many cities had covered with Band-Aid approaches. Our 2018 assessment of 10 cities revealed that while several of the cities were beginning to use a cross-sector approach to address their support disparities, none of the ten cities were offering over 55% of the supports needed for all children in the community to thrive. Simply stated, America’s cities cannot help children reach their full potential while only giving them half of the support.

Several months ago, the COVID-19 pandemic ripped off the Band-Aid to reveal the systemwide inequities in most communities. Today, these com-

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munities remain in crisis mode, attempting to connect the dots and fill the holes caused by the persistent health, education, food, housing, mental health and transportation disparities, to name a few. Even the cities that have prepared a path to recover from the COVID-19 virus, have yet to develop a framework or path to address the true sicknesses in their systems — unemployment and non-livable wages, pervasive learning and wealth gaps, rampant disparities and unfettered systemic racism. COVID-19 made clear that inequities impacting any part of a community weaken the entire community.

Before state and local public officials can experience transformative changes in the heart of their cities, they must commit to concretizing transformative changes by creating loving systems for all. With the release of this 2020 Loving Cities Index, once again Schott engages a new group of communities in the work of assessing and addressing the supports needed in their systems to extend the care, capacity, commitment and stability to all of their children and families — creating the type of loving systems that makes it clear that their lives matter.

Assessing and creating these systems should have a heightened level of importance, as individuals of all hues and backgrounds across the country have taken to the streets to reaffirm Black Lives Matter and protest the police murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, to name just a few. As protesters hit their streets in peaceful protest and unity, they seek to decouple America's vision of opportunity and democracy from the tools of violence and oppression.

On America's moral arc is the brutality and genocide waged against Native Americans, the slave trade, Jim Crow laws, the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing killing four Black girls, massive deportations separating children and families, the murders of nine church members at Mother Emanuel AME in Charleston, SC. But also bending that are Harriett Tubman and those who maintained an underground

railroad network, abolitionist writers and poets, social justice organizations, those who marched on Washington to secure civil rights and voting rights legislation, Sanctuary Cities, Black Lives Matter, and today hundreds of thousands of peaceful protesters who are committed to lending a shoulder to bend America's moral arc towards justice.

The Old Testament of the Bible gives an account of a man named Joshua who right before taking God's people across the Jordan River, reminds them that "you have never been here before." Joshua issues this proclamation fully aware that these people had already crossed many challenging seas and rivers in their journey. Yet as they sat on the bank of the Jordan River, they needed to know that though it looked familiar their God was seeking to do a new thing once they got to the other side.

While the unrest and protest and even the format of this Loving Cities Index may look familiar, collectively we have never been here before. And when we move beyond this moment and cross this proverbial river, history will judge all of us by whether the growing awareness of racism, violence and oppression translates into commitment to alter our communities' and our nation's course, to achieve systemic, lasting change.

The Schott Foundation remains committed to walking towards new opportunities and being a critical bridge to create the types of loving systems that ensure all children and families can thrive. As cities discuss defunding police budgets, the Loving Cities Index provides city and community leaders an assessment of where to reallocate those resources to add the critically needed supports to make the community a vibrant, safe and more loving place to live. Schott issues this 2020 Index as a community and philanthropic partner lending a shoulder and joining history's army of justice fighters who used love for humanity to lean in and bend America's moral arc toward justice.

## FOREWORD

### Nikole Hannah-Jones

*Pulitzer Prize Winning  
Investigative Journalist*

When public health departments first began releasing racial data on Covid-19 infections and deaths, it came as no surprise to those of us who have studied this country's history that Black Americans would suffer the worst. Of course an unprecedented global pandemic would hurt most those who have been living under a 400-year racial one. The long shadow of slavery forced black Americans disproportionately into the type of service jobs that made workers more vulnerable to infection, it created the segregated neighborhoods full of environmental toxins that make Black Americans sicker at earlier ages, it ensured Black Americans experience a lack of quality healthcare options, that they rely heavily on public transit and live the crowded conditions that make social distancing impossible. All of this racialized inequality built a dragnet of disadvantage leading to unparalleled Black suffering. COVID-19 did not create these inequalities. It magnified and laid bare the racial inequality that's long been endemic in our cities but that we have again and again chosen to justify and ignore. With millions of Americans now suffering the job losses and financial precariousness that have been the norm for Black America, we have seen a willingness to reconsider our stingy social safety net and a renewed understanding that government's job is to support and uplift its citizens, particularly those who are struggling the most. The depth of Black suffering brought on by pandemic will be unprecedented in our lifetime. Already, more than half of Black adults are out of work. More than one in four Black adults have missed a mortgage or rent payment since the shutdowns. Black children are expected to lose 10 months of learning due to school shut-



downs — the most of all groups. And that's on top of Black Americans dying of COVID-19 at the highest rates. In the wake of George Floyd's killing, hundreds of thousands of people have been marching in every state in the country to declare that Black Lives Matter. But Black lives cannot only matter in the rare occasions where a police encounter turns deadly. The changes we demand in this moment must be far greater, far bolder and far more transformative in all of the areas that rob Black Americans of all ages, but especially Black children, of the opportunity to take part in America's bounty. We, as a society, must not tolerate these immoral systems of structural and preventable disadvantage any longer. This moment of unprecedented protest and unprecedented national pain must lead to transformation of all the systems of inequities that we have too long tolerated. The racial and social economic inequality in this country was intentionally created. We put an inordinate amount of societal resources and money into creating it. That is disheartening but also reveals an important truth: That which has been created can be un-created. If you built it, you can tear it

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down and build something new. In this moment of potential transformation, where the societal rifts have forced us to question that which we have too long accepted, this Schott Foundation for Public Education 2020 Loving Cities Index provides a roadmap for us to reconstruct cities based on opportunity, dignity and equality. In this moment of potential transformation, we can defy the selfish ideology of scarcity and acknowledge that we have enough resources in this

great country to take care of and support all of our citizens. Inequality is a choice. It is time for us to make another. We can start here by getting at the root of it all. We can start by committing to build, for the first time in our history, a nation of Loving Cities.



Photo by Ken Fieger

# The Loving Cities Index



**Throughout American history, the policies and practices that create opportunity gaps at birth have been baked into the ecosystem of local and state systems.**

It is well documented that many of these policies and practices were rooted in implicit racial bias at best, and explicit racism and hate at worst. Even today, far too often the policies and practices that govern how cities manage and resource housing, education, healthcare, transportation, workforce development, criminal justice, and civic engagement reinforce inequity in outcomes for children and families of color compared to their white peers by creating a system of barriers to success across all facets of a child's living and learning environments. These inequities have been laid bare during the COVID-19 pandemic, where people of color are disproportionately represented in low paid front-line work facing the greatest exposure to the virus, and often are cut off from the healthcare, food services, income stability, and other resources that white, more affluent families access. And the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis has become a tipping point that opened a flood gate of awareness of racism, protests, and calls for systemic change, including ending the police violence faced by communities of color. Certainly, it is impossible to create loving systems without changing that fundamental underpinning.

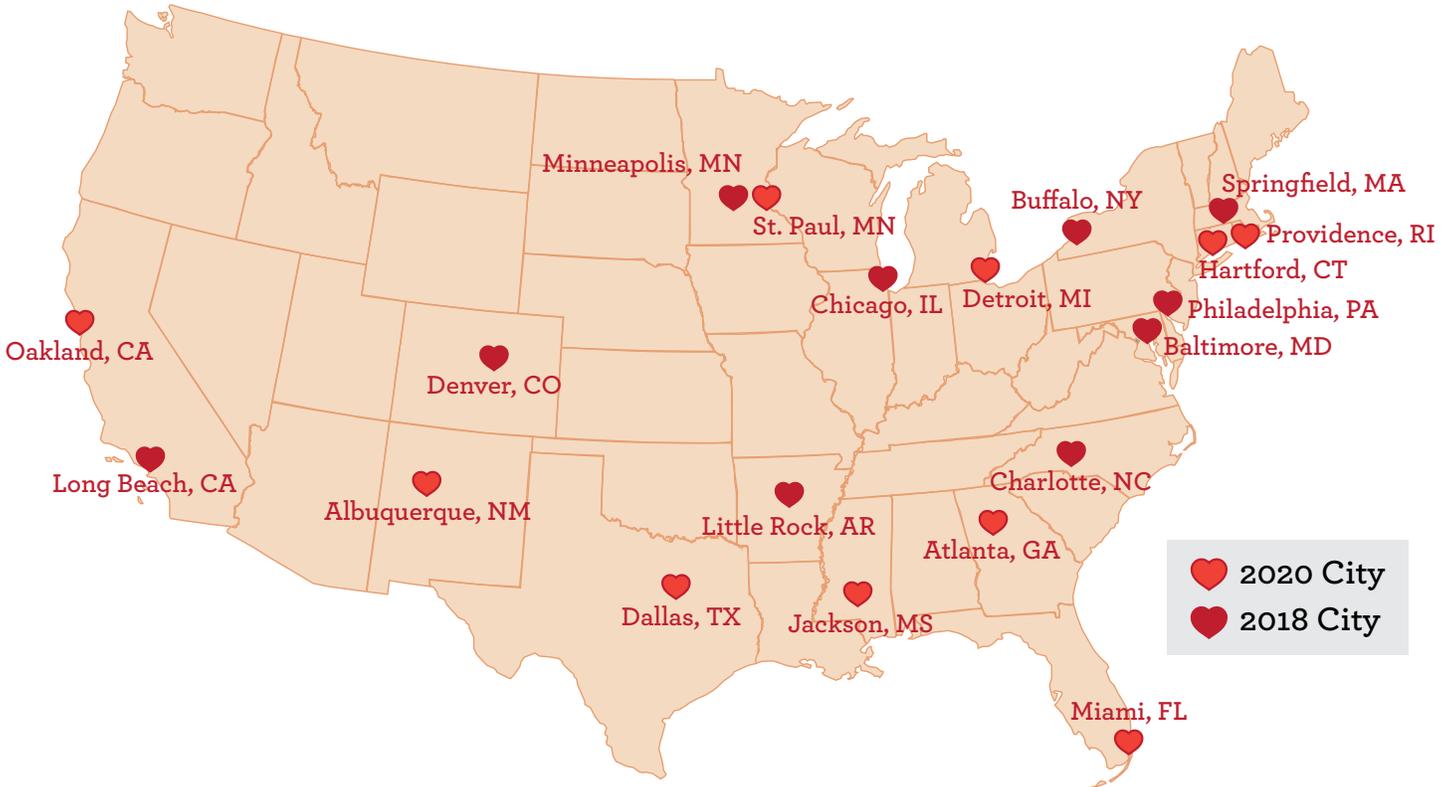
To address racial disparities in learning outcomes and provide equal opportunity, we must replace racially biased policies with practices that institutionalize love and support for all children. The Loving Cities Index is a tool and framework that provides a comprehensive analysis of local systems of love and support. The Index framework draws from the wisdom of communities and a large body of evidence-based research to identify 25 indicators

that represent the supports needed for students to have the opportunity to learn and achieve academic and economic success. Each indicator reflects key city policies and practices needed to provide all children with care, stability, commitment, and capacity. The Schott Foundation believes that, by prioritizing these measures, over time cities can significantly accelerate educational outcomes, particularly for students of color.

**The Schott Foundation and research partners have studied 20 cities using the Loving Cities Index to assess the systems of love and support in place at the local and state levels to provide children with an opportunity to learn.** Ten cities are profiled in this 2020 Loving Cities Index Report, and ten were previously profiled in the [2018 report](#).

For each city, researchers collected publicly available data at the local level collected consistently across the country and scored the city against 25 indicators of love and support. For each indicator, a city can earn up to three points for levels of access to that support, and when data disaggregated by race and ethnicity is available, cities can earn up to three more points for equity in access across racial groups. We recognize that opportunity gaps are impacted by more than just race/ethnicity, and ideally city, state, and federal policymakers should be collecting and analyzing data by gender, sexuality, and other intersectional identities that tell a deeper story of access and equity. Unfortunately, much of the national datasets that we used for this report did not include data disaggregated by both race and gender, and oftentimes localities are not collecting and reporting data at this level. And sexuality is often missing completely from

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disaggregated data. Organizing to require states and localities to disaggregate more data by race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation is an essential part of addressing opportunity gaps which remain hidden because of data gaps. Simply stated, data gaps are too often platforms for opportunity gaps.

We consistently see massive gaps in access to resources in each city, reflecting major opportunity gaps based on race. While in each city there may be some policies and practices in place to provide access to some critical supports, every city studied has significant gaps in delivering the full system of supports that were needed for all children to thrive. We have developed profiles for each city studied. Within each city profile, we provide historical context for racial inequities, highlighting the policies rooted in racism and hate that have governed access

to education, housing, fair wages, healthcare, public spaces and other critical resources and supports, based on race; and highlight the persistent racial inequities in access that exist in our communities today, and the anti-racist policies that can be instituted to address them.

**To achieve education justice, we must support healing in communities harmed by a long history of racist policies that persist to this day and replace systems of oppression with systems that institutionalize love and support.** We hope the Loving Cities Index profile can be a tool for local community advocates that work tirelessly to advance an agenda of love and support for all children. We hope that city and state leaders will work in partnership with communities of color to truly meet the promise of “equity and justice for all.”

See the full report and all city profiles at [lovingcities.schottfoundation.org](https://lovingcities.schottfoundation.org)



# Providence, RI

Located in northern Rhode Island, Providence is the state capital and home to 180,000 people, making it the most populous city in the state. Providence is one of the oldest cities in the U.S., with European colonists laying claim to the land in 1636. The “Creative Capital” and “Divine City,” Providence is a major seaport and a hub for trade, healthcare, and financial services. The Providence area includes Pawtucket, East Providence, Central Falls, Cranston, Warwick, and Woonsocket.

Before European arrival, the area was home to the Narragansett and several other smaller tribes. During *The Great Swamp Massacre*, which occurred in present-day Kingston, many Narragansett fled into the woods or migrated north and west.<sup>1</sup> Persisting through centuries of colonial persecution, today the Narragansett constitute the largest group of native people in the state, followed by the Pequot, Wampanoag, and Nipmuc. Much of the state’s native population lives in Providence.<sup>2</sup> Further setting the stage for generations of racial inequality, the region played a major role in the transatlantic slave trade. Rhode Island was one of the trade’s major geographic corners; sugar and molasses grown on Caribbean plantations were brought to Rhode Island for rum and then carried to West Africa in exchange for enslaved people. Despite having passed laws abolishing slavery in the 1600s the area heavily benefited from Southern slavery.<sup>3</sup>

Racist policies and practices created deep inequities in cities like Providence. Despite being a northern state, Black people in Rhode Island faced significant racial discrimination, leading one longtime community organizer to refer to it as the “Mississippi of New England.”<sup>4</sup> Racism played a role in the city’s develop-

ment decisions. For example, during a 1950s highway development project, officials chose routes that favored affluent white residents and reinforced segregation.<sup>5</sup> Federal policy also played a role. During the 1930s, the Roosevelt administration created the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) to lend new mortgages and refinance home mortgages that were at default during the Depression. By 1936 the agency had provided one million new mortgages and the agency owned one in five nationally.<sup>6</sup> The agency developed lending risk maps in over 100 large cities<sup>7</sup>, and map-makers relied on the prejudices of local loan officers, city officials, appraisers and realtors in appraising sections of the city, rating white areas of town as “desirable” and “best” for lending and areas of town where Black people, immigrants, and Jewish people lived as “hazardous,” thereby curtailing lending or issuing loans at much higher interest rates.<sup>8</sup>

Many Black and immigrant families who could not obtain fair mortgages were forced into contract sales, which they paid sometimes double the actual worth of the home, could not build equity, and were more easily subject to eviction. HOLC maps knit segregation into the landscape, and today many of these historic maps align with metro-wide segregation and inequalities in homeownership. (See Providence’s HOLC map showing the “redlining” of neighborhoods throughout the city.) Today, a lower percentage of families of color in Providence own homes compared to whites,<sup>9</sup> and more Black families and Latino families live near environmental contamination.<sup>10</sup>

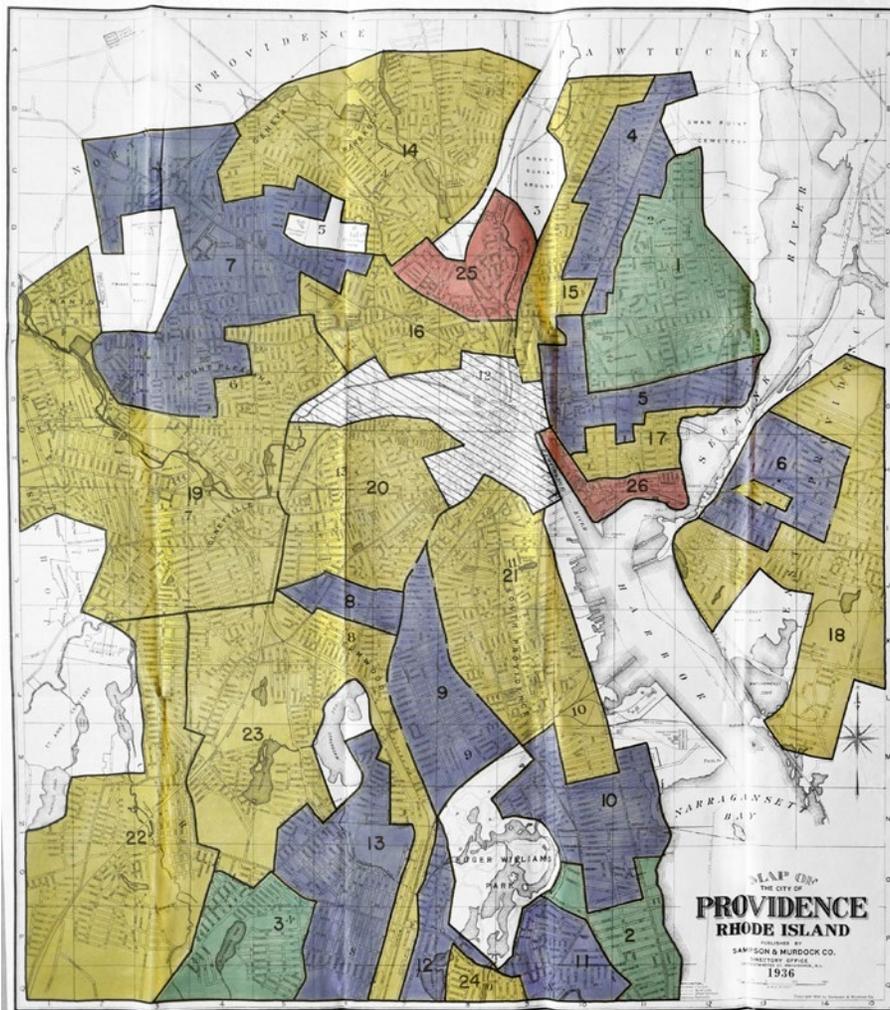
School segregation also undoubtedly determined intergenerational opportunity, even in northern cities like Providence. In 1896 the U.S. Supreme Court upheld racial segregation and for the next 60 years *Jim*

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Crow laws legally defined schools, workplaces, buses, railroad cars, and even hospitals and cemeteries as either “white only” or “colored” (*Plessy v. Ferguson*).<sup>11</sup> In 1954, segregation was challenged in *Brown v. Board of Education*, and the Supreme Court held that the “separate but equal” violated the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment. In a unanimous decision, Chief Justice, Earl Warren wrote, “In the field of public education, the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.”<sup>12</sup> Subsequently, school desegregation plans were initiated in many cities, both in the South as well as in the North, where schools were often racially segregated without the formal laws of the South. On the face of it, educational equity in Rhode Island districts may not have looked to be a problem—the state was early to outlaw school segregation (1866) and had a progressive education tradition.<sup>13</sup> But, like many northern cities, due to residential patterns and district boundaries, Providence schools

were segregated.<sup>14</sup> In 1967, the school board ordered schools to desegregate.<sup>15</sup><sup>16</sup> White-flight and demographic changes<sup>17</sup> have created a district that today serves mostly students of color and low-income students while other districts in the state are whiter and wealthier.<sup>18</sup>

Providence operates 41 schools, including 22 elementary schools, seven middle schools 10 high schools, and two charter schools<sup>19</sup> and 24,075 students, with Hispanic students accounting for 63% of the student population, Black students 17%, White students 9%, Asian students 4.9% and Native students, 1%. Almost a quarter of the students are English language learners. The rate of poverty among Black children is twice that of white children, and for Latino children, it is nearly three times that. And, a higher percentage of Black youth and Latino were out of school and unemployed.

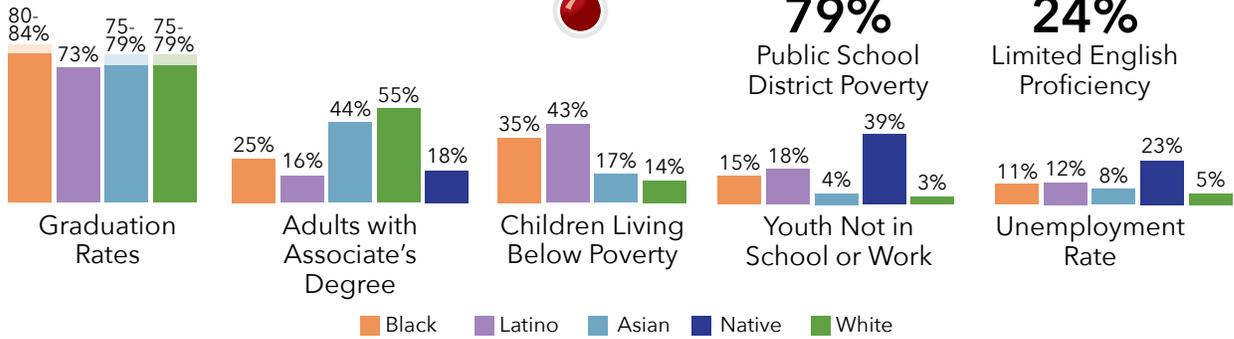


A 1936 example of a redlining map of Providence.

# THERMOMETER INDICATORS



Current conditions for childhood success



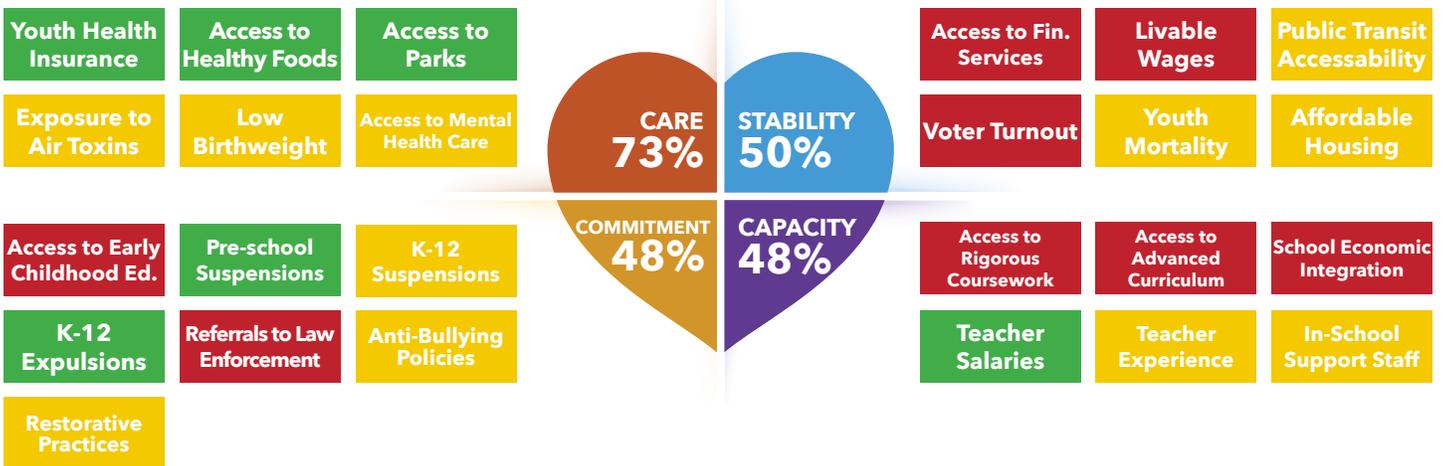
**79%**  
Public School District Poverty

**24%**  
Limited English Proficiency

# THERMOSTAT INDICATORS



Access to supports that provide all children the opportunity to learn



Overall, Providence has bright as well as challenging spots across each of the domains. When it comes to *Care*, Providence had the highest rate of insured youth (99%), and one of the highest rate of park access (97%) compared to other cities studied. Providence had the lowest exposure to air toxins overall (29), though there is a nearly 20 points difference between white neighborhoods and Latino and Black neighborhoods reflecting historical and ongoing policies of segregation and allowing industrial development and contamination near communities of color and away from White neighborhoods. Neighborhood stability is impacted by economic inequity – with Black and Latino households far less likely to earn living wages compared to white households.

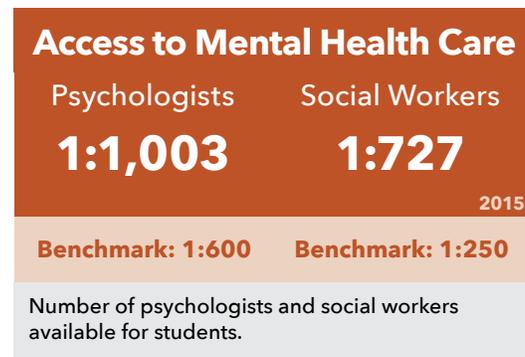
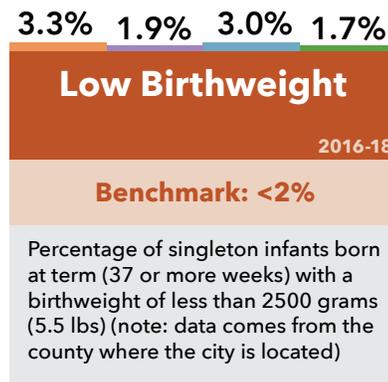
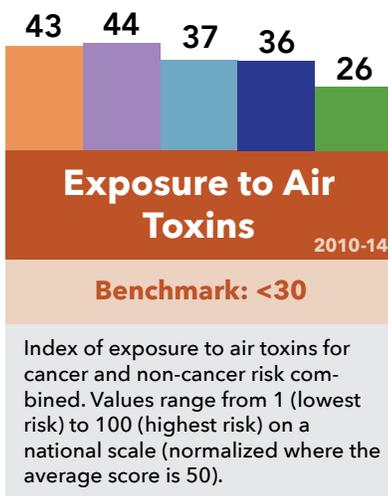
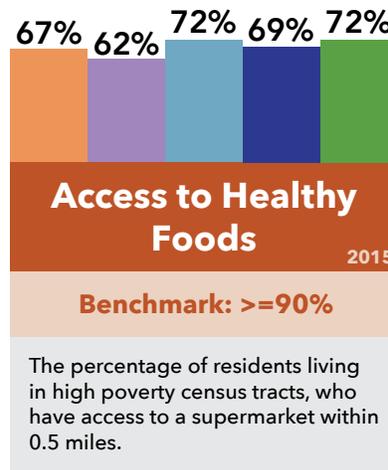
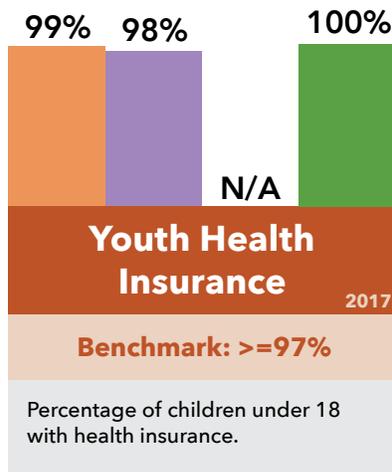
In schools, only 38% of 3-4-year-olds were enrolled in preschool, with white youth are more than two times as likely to be enrolled. The district appears to have a culture of over-policing in schools, which especially impacts Native and Black youth. 16% of all Black students and 15% of all Native students received at least one in-

or out-of-school suspension. The district also had a high number of police referrals relative to other cities, with 15% of all Native students and 5% of Black students being referred to law enforcement. While schools do appear to offer relatively high teacher salaries and have in-school support staff, there are large racial gaps in access to advanced curriculum. Providence has one Community School, established through the Rhode Island Partnership for Community Schools, a statewide alliance to mobilize resources for the Community School model.<sup>20</sup> Community Schools are “public schools that partner with families and community organizations to provide well-rounded educational opportunities and supports for students’ school success.”<sup>21</sup> Well-implemented Community Schools are an evidenced-based approach for supporting student success in academics and beyond, and there’s an opportunity to build on this model to improve learning environments for students in Providence, to ensure transformation system change is driven by the community of students and parents.<sup>22</sup>

# CARE

Providence has 73% of the supports needed for *Care*. Nearly 100% of all youth in Providence have health insurance coverage across racial groups. Still, there are racial gaps in low birth weights among infants, with Black and Asian infants nearly two times as likely to be born below weight compared to white infants. This issue highlights racial inequity in adequate care information and services and discriminatory attitudes that often affect outcomes based on race. Within schools, Providence's investment in social workers and psychologists is still well below the recommended level of provider to student ratio, highlighting a need for increased access to ensure all students have mental healthcare and support in accessing other resources they may need to thrive.

When it comes to health resources in the community, a majority (67%) of low-income residents live near supermarkets, but Latino low-income residents had considerably lower access (62%) compared to white and Asian low-income residents (72%). The vast majority of residents (97%) live near a public park. Overall, exposure to air toxins was the lowest of cities studied (index of 29 out of 100), though there were massive differences in exposure between Latino and Black neighborhoods and white neighborhoods. Inequity in air quality often is a reflection of historical and ongoing practices of neighborhood segregation and intentional industrial development in closer proximity to communities of color, and away from white communities.



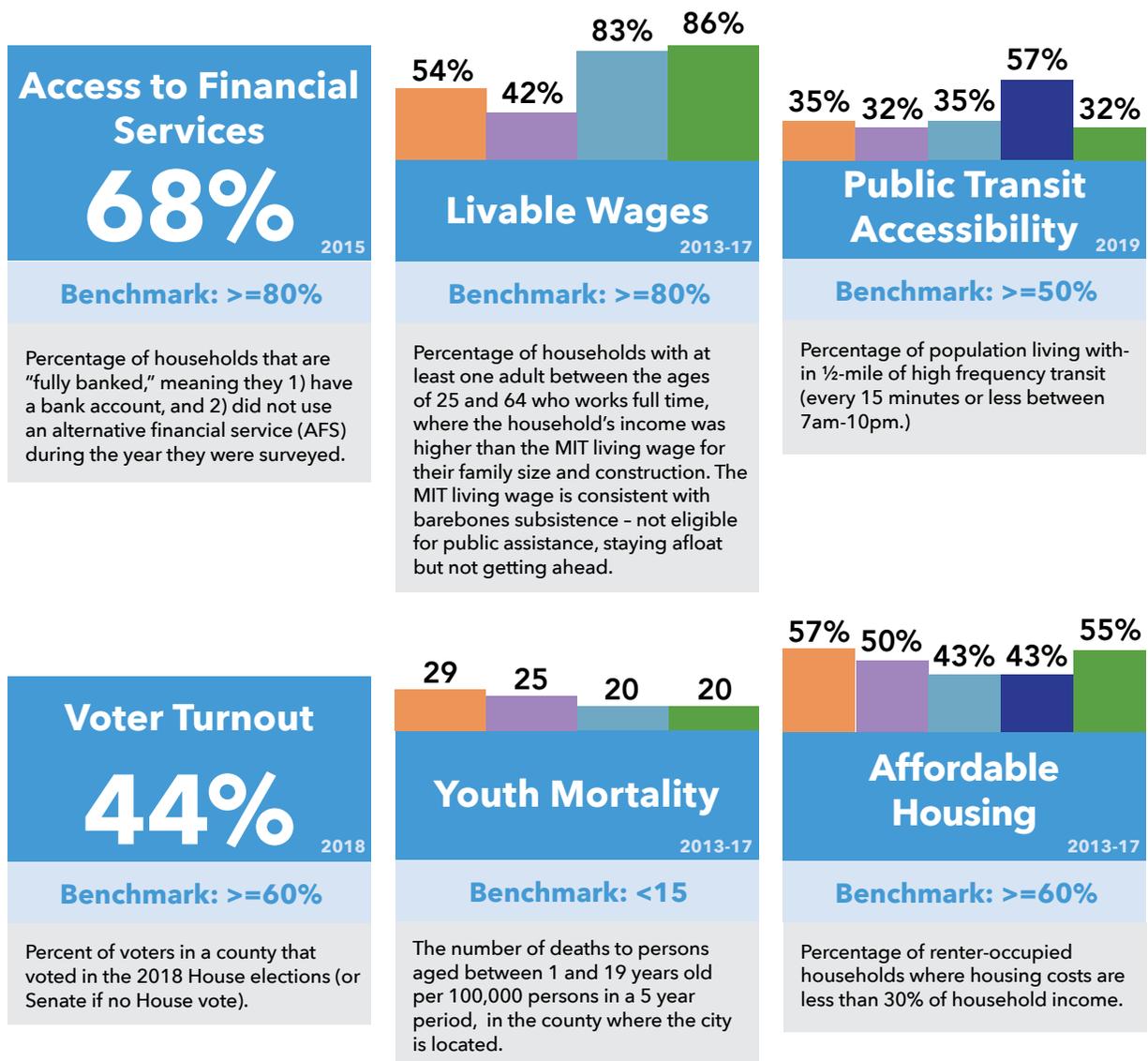
Black Latino Asian Native\* White

\*Sample size for Native was often too small for reporting, but where available it has been included.

# STABILITY

Providence has 50% of the supports needed for neighborhood *Stability*. One of the largest barriers to opportunity facing families of color in Providence, as well as across the country, is economic inequality. Only 54% of Black and 42% of Latino households earned enough for their labor to live above subsistence, compared to 86% of white and 83% of Asian households. About half of renters in Providence struggle to access affordable housing – with Asian and Native renters most affected. When renters pay more than

30% of their income towards rent, they are considered “housing cost-burdened” and their ability to cover other critical living expenditures is put at risk. Public transit is only accessible to about a third of the residents, though access seems to be comparable across racial/ethnic groups. Access to traditional financial institutions and credit services in Providence (68%) is below the national average.

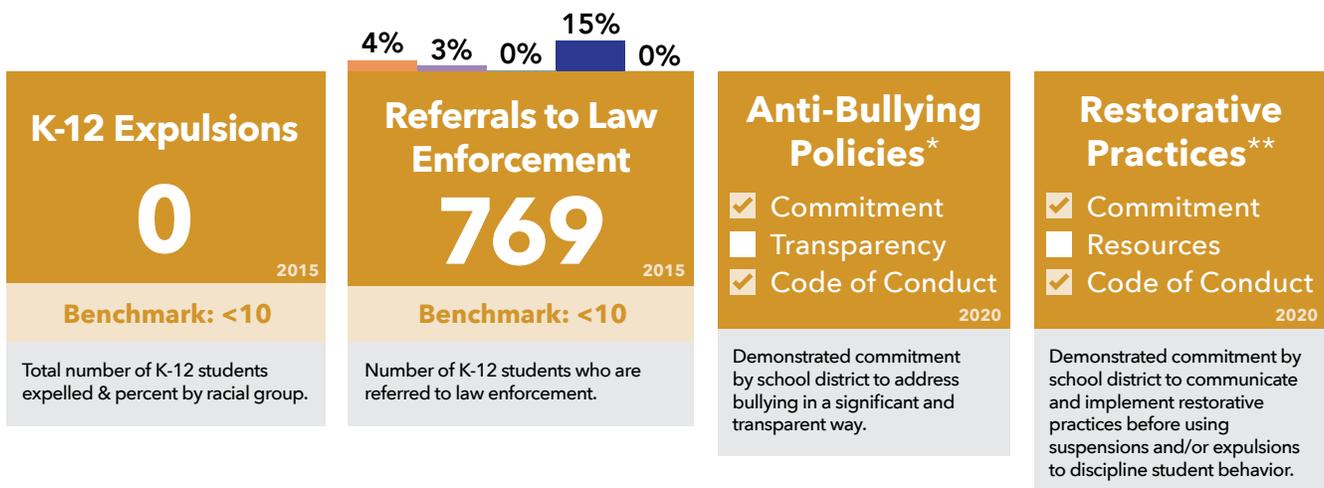
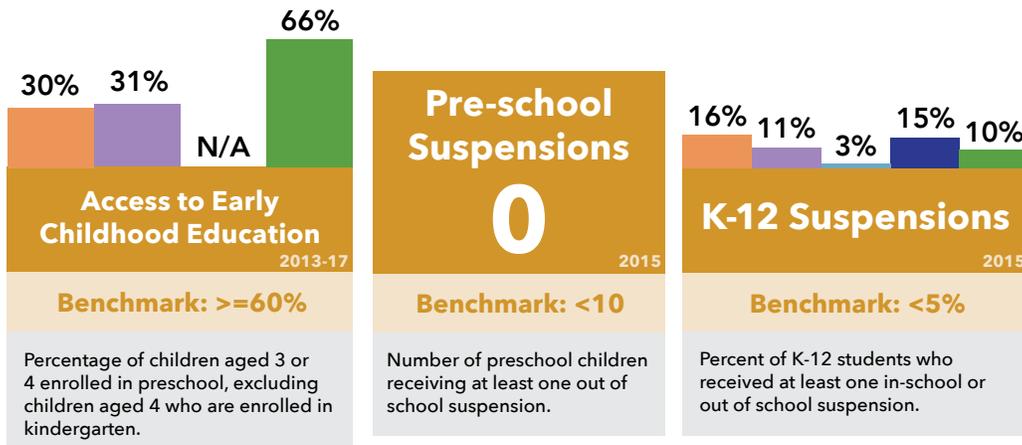


Black Latino Asian Native White

# COMMITMENT

Providence has 48% of the supports needed for *Commitment* to each child's success. Only 37% of 3-4-year-olds were enrolled in pre-school and there were big racial inequities: 66% of white children were enrolled in pre-school compared to 30% of Black and 31% of Latino children. Providence reported zero out-of-school suspensions for preschoolers, but at the K-12 level students across racial/ethnic groups experience high rates of suspension and expulsion, with 16% of all Black students and 15% of all Native students experiencing at least one in- or out-of-school suspension. The district also issued a staggering number of police referrals (769) and

made 140 school-related arrests. The police referrals disproportionately impacted Native students, with 15% of all Native students being referred to the police, as well as 4% of all Black and 3% of Hispanic students. In a district with approximately one psychologist and social worker for every 1,000 students, nearly half of all schools had a sworn law enforcement officer on-premises. All of these factors suggest a systemic culture of over-policing students, especially students of color, which must be dismantled and replaced with resources and supports for students and educators, including greater resources for implementing restorative justice practices.



■ Black
 ■ Latino
 ■ Asian
 ■ Native
 ■ White

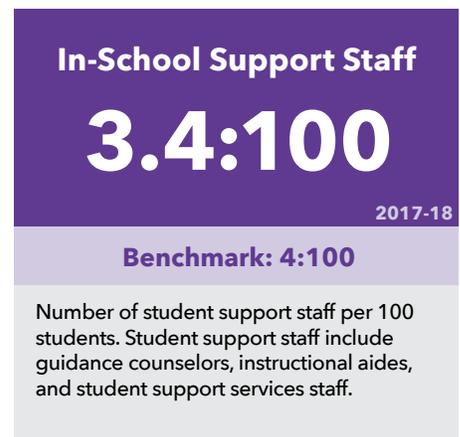
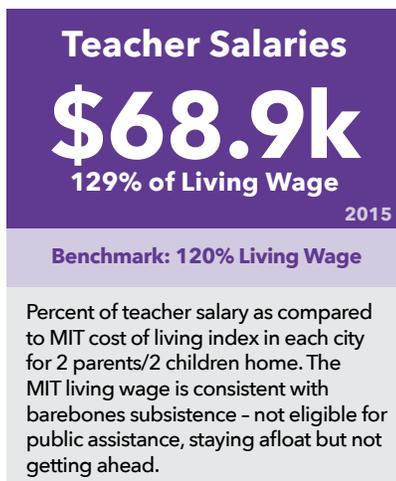
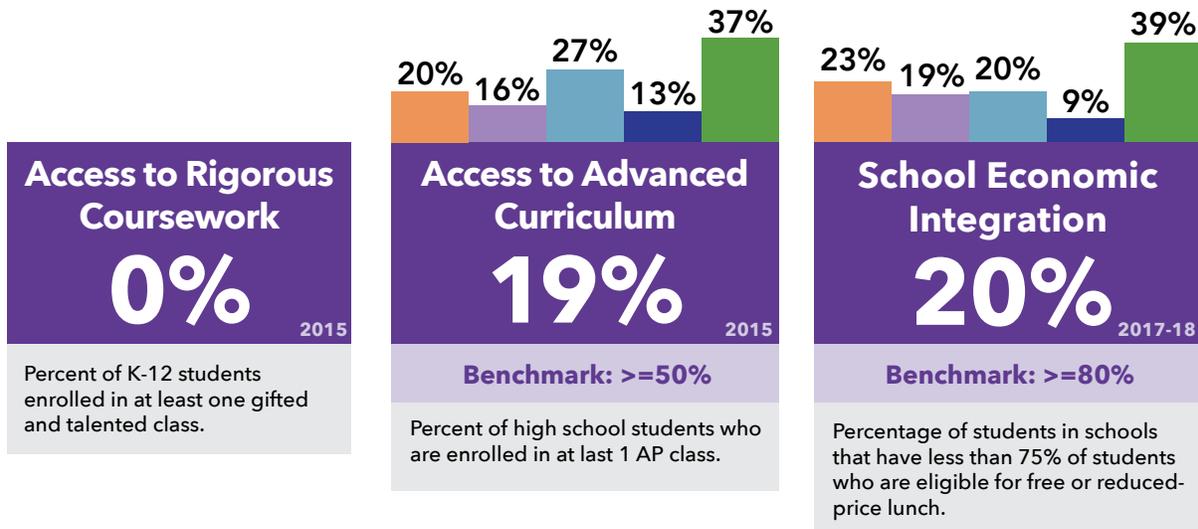
\* **Commitment:** Is there a clear continual commitment to activities to reduce bullying incidences?  
**Transparency:** Are there clearly accessible dates to bullying incidents or a clear point of contact /department on bullying?  
**Code of Conduct:** Is bullying clearly addressed in student code of conduct with instructions on how to report incidences?  
 \*\* **Commitment:** Is there a clear commitment by school system to use restorative practices?  
**Resources:** Are there clear and easily accessible resources?  
**Code of Conduct:** Are Restorative Practices addressed in the student code of conduct?

# CAPACITY

Providence has 48% of the supports needed for *Capacity* to ensure school environments are adequately resourced and providing students an excellent, high-quality education. More may be needed to ensure Providence students have access to rigorous coursework that prepares them for college and career readiness. Currently, only 19% of high school students are enrolled in at least one Advanced Placement course, including only 14% of Native, 20% of Black, and 16% of Latino students compared to 37% of white students. There doesn't appear to be K-12 gifted and talented programming, which many activists feel is a better approach, preferring instead that there are efforts to ensure all students are getting high quality, rigorous coursework.

Teacher salaries on average were well above the minimum cost of living for the city of Providence (129% of living wages), though teacher retention still may be an issue given that only 89% of the teaching force had at least two years of experience. As in many

cities, school enrollment policies in the district have led to students of color being more likely to attend schools where over 75% of the student body is experiencing poverty, compared to White students. The numbers, in general, are not quite as stark as other cities, though Native youth, in particular, are almost all attending "high poverty" schools. Providence, like all school districts, must investigate and address how their policies, especially when it comes to charter school enrollment, contribute to racial and economic segregation of schools and determine ways to reduce the number of "high poverty" schools. Fully-resourced Community Schools offer a promising approach to ensuring schools are designed in collaboration with communities and in ways that are culturally responsive and resource-full. Building upon the current efforts to grow the number of students attending Community Schools can help ensure all students have access to healthy living and learning environments.



Black Latino Asian Native White



# HOW YOU CAN JOIN THE MOVEMENT TO CREATE LOVING SYSTEMS

**All communities can use the Loving Cities Framework to look holistically at the level of supports in place and determine a local agenda for delivering a system of love and support to help all children thrive. We have intentionally focused on “thermostat” indicators, meaning things that can be readily changed through policies and practices to provide access to those resources and supports children need. And, every one of the thermostat indicators in the Loving Cities Index can be impacted at a local level.**

In each city and locality, we know there are community organizers and activists that have been leading campaigns for transforming school and community systems to support racial justice and more equitable outcomes across the various indicators highlighted here. We encourage elected officials, public sector decision-makers, and local philanthropy to come to the table with these community-based leaders to discuss this data, understand their agendas, and establish and resource a shared plan to rebuild systems to be grounded in love, rather than inequity, and ensure all children are accessing supports for care, stability, commitment, and capacity.

This is more important than ever, given the academic, health, economic and humanity crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and the public awareness brought on by the senseless murder of George Floyd and scores of other Blacks whose lives matter. Students will be starting the next school year with new trauma and needs from being out of school and isolated from friends for such a prolonged time – especially with changing economic and health situations at home due to unprecedented loss of jobs of parents and experiencing family members getting

sick or possibly dying. The need for social-emotional supports, mental and physical healthcare supports, case management, and individualized learning approaches were critical before, and now must be seen as essential. Similarly, the protests across the country around racial profiling and police violence against Black communities, as well as other communities of color, have begun to galvanize greatly increased support for the ongoing efforts in the education justice movement to remove police from schools, dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline, and ensure we are rebuilding school cultures to be humanizing and grounded in youth development and support. The time is now to take bold actions to address these injustices against Black and brown children that have persisted in schools for far too long.

Across the country, we see powerful examples of organizations and community members taking steps to rebuild systems in ways that give all children an opportunity to learn and thrive. While each city may identify their own priorities, there are four key things that all cities can do to strengthen their system of supports. These are outlined below along with promising models and approaches to learn and build from.

 **ACTION STEP 1:**

## Adopt the Community School Model for Delivering a System of **CARE** to all Children and Families

To address childhood trauma and other mental and physical needs, cities need to equip each and every public school to be a hub for assessing and meeting healthcare and other resource needs. As an essential component of efforts to improve student learning, especially for low-income students and students of color, learning environments need to be integrated with healthcare delivery, as well as social services, and youth and community development. The **Community Schools Model** is an approach that treats schools as a hub for children and families to access a range of supports, including healthcare. This model is critical to addressing the childhood trauma that children living in poverty experience, especially children of color who face racialized violence and criminalization.

There are currently over 5,000 community schools and the number is growing, with cities like Cincinnati, New York, Baltimore, Chicago, and others making significant commitments to transforming their entire public school network into family-centered resource hubs that meet the full needs of children and their families.

Models like **Communities in Schools** and **City Connects** equip schools with staff and tools to provide a system for addressing individual student and family needs at scale. Communities in Schools has affiliates in 25 states and the District of Columbia, serving 1.5 million students in 2,300 schools. “CIS places a school support staff in each school who identifies challenges students face in class or at home and coordinates with community partners to bring outside resources inside schools – from immediate needs like food or clothing to more complex ones like counseling or emotional support.” The results of providing integrated student supports are dramatic: 91% of CIS-served seniors graduated or received

a GED and 99% of students stayed in school. For more information on CIS’s model [click here](#).

City Connects has a similar approach being implemented across 79 sites in Boston, Springfield, and Brockton, MA; New York City; Dayton and Springfield, OH; Hartford, CT; and Minneapolis, MN. In addition to individual assessments and referrals to community providers, City Connects uses an advanced tracking system so they can continue to track student utilization of providers and individual progress. Longitudinal studies have shown that students are 50% less likely to drop out with City Connects support and demonstrate higher school readiness, standardized test scores, and higher grades on report cards. For more information on the City Connects model [click here](#).

In addition to school models that refer students to providers, [School-Based Health Alliance](#) is a network of local, state and national nonprofits working to “complement the work of school nurses by providing a readily accessible referral site for students who are without a medical home or in need of more comprehensive services such as primary, mental, oral, or vision health care. SBHA understands that healthcare for young people, no matter their zip code, is critical to giving them an equal opportunity to learn and grow and that school-based health care is a powerful tool for reaching children who unjustly experience disparities in access and outcomes. As of 2013-14, there were “2,315 school-based health centers that served students and communities in 49 of 50 states and the District of Columbia, 20% growth since 2010-11.” SBHA and its state affiliates help schools establish and effectively run school-based health centers. For more information on SBHA affiliates, [click here](#).

 ACTION STEP 2:

## Address Segregation and the Effect of Gentrification on Neighborhoods and Schools to Increase Community **STABILITY** and Equitable Allocation of Capital

To address community and school segregation, we need to build a mainstream understanding of the history of policies in the U.S. that created segregation and wealth inequity and come to terms with the damage those policies continue to have on communities today. In his book *The Color of Law*, Richard Rothstein recognizes that we as a society have largely “forgotten the history of how our government segregated America,” and schools widely teach curricula that have been white-washed, failing to educate the public on our history of oppression and racial segregation. The lack of a broad understanding of how we created opportunity gaps affects the ability to build political will around solutions that meet these root causes of inequity in outcomes. So, shifting the narrative to raise consciousness is critical to addressing inequality in income, homeownership, inter-generational wealth, and political power, all of which are created intentionally by the system of policy and practice rooted in racism and racial and economic inequality.

*The Color of Law* outlines several examples of affirming policies that could be adopted if there were a greater political will to reverse the damage of past policies and supports rooted in racism. One key policy change community can adopt is inclusionary zoning policy, which can “require housing developers to set aside a portion of the homes they build at below-market rates, and reserve the right

for the public housing commission to purchase one-third of those units to operate as subsidized public housing.” Montgomery County, Maryland is a local example that has such policies in place, and the connection to improved educational outcomes is clear. “The program’s success is evidenced by the measurably higher achievement of low-income African American students who live and attend school in the county’s wealthiest suburbs.”

Reforming the federal Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program can also lead to greater community integration. Section 8 is by far the nation’s largest low-income housing program with 2.2 million vouchers authorized to date to help extremely low-income families live in lower-poverty neighborhoods. Because of practices in place for calculating the maximum subsidy and rules that allow discrimination against renters using vouchers, families generally only have the ability to move to incrementally higher-income neighborhoods, and as a result, this program has contributed to the maintenance of economic and racial segregation. Increasing subsidies to be on par with housing costs in more affluent neighborhoods and increasing the number of vouchers allocated to serve all families that have been harmed by historically racist policies would be a large step in beginning to heal and restore justice to communities.

♥ ACTION STEP 3:

# Make a **COMMITMENT** to Student Success, with Learning Environments Designed for Humanity, Democracy, Education, and Opportunity, not Injustice

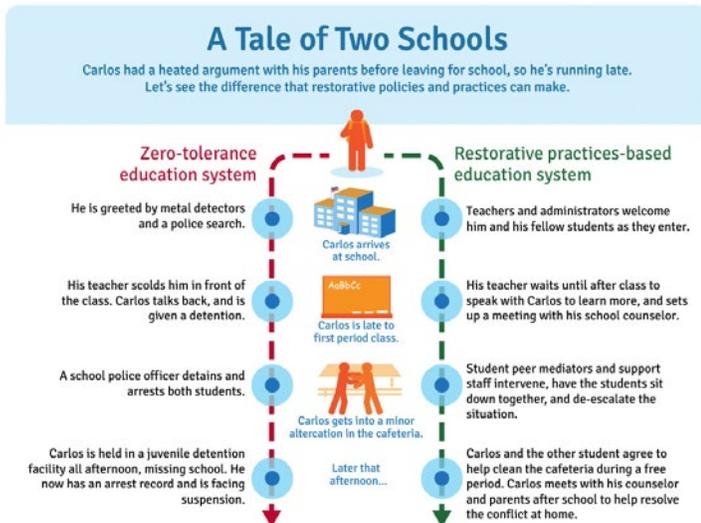
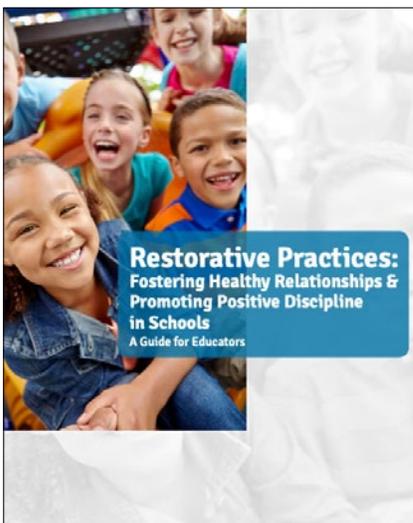
American public schools, as our nation’s only mandatory network of institutions for children and families, are a lifeline to opportunity in every urban, suburban, and rural community. That’s why we believe the public education system is also the lifeline for advancing our democracy.

For young people, our public schools are where they often experience their first engagement with society or initial feelings of being pushed out. It’s also where they are first protected or overpoliced, learn about justice, or experience injustice. And it’s where parents and everyone else in the community have the best opportunity to advance efforts to create a more just society, whether that is by putting pressure on local school boards or dealing with local control of state funding.

At the top of the list of practices to create a humane, constructive, positive climate for students is to remove police from schools and end zero-tolerance policies. Restorative justice and police-free schools has been a key demand of community-based organizations and national alliances that Schott is proud to support, such as Journey for Justice (J4J) and Dignity in Schools Campaign—and the groundwork they have laid is

the foundation for the accelerated movement by cities such as Minneapolis, Portland (Oregon), and Denver to end police contracts following the police murder of George Floyd. The policy guide produced by Schott in partnership with the Advancement Project, NEA and AFT, [Restorative Practices: Fostering Healthy Relationships & Promoting Positive Discipline in School](#), is a helpful tool for educators and communities to design alternatives to police intervention that have proven effective in providing safety and healthy learning environments.

Racial differences in rates of suspension and expulsion and data on levels of harassment that students are confronted with at school can give us some indication of the discrimination that students face from peers and adults. These “invisible forces” are hard to measure, but are becoming clearer through research from groups like GLSEN and Georgetown Law Center that put data to the implicit biases and harassment that students, teachers, administrators and other adults within the system inflict against girls and boys of color. For recommendations on practices for increasing inclusion and reducing bullying in schools see GLSEN’s report [click here](#).



The [Alliance for Quality Education's \(AQE\) report](#) outlines one step in developing a comprehensive restorative justice program: creating an effective in-school suspension program that entails discipline in school and offers appropriate services for the student to overcome the reasons for misbehaving and gain the supports they need to succeed in school.

Cities like Baltimore have made strides in adopting policies and practices that create a culture of inclusion within schools and end the cycle of push-out. In 2016, Baltimore had a nearly 20% drop in the number of suspensions, a reflection of the increased focus on positive behavioral interventions in city schools, and of recognizing the need to understand

what's going on in a child's life that may be manifesting as behavioral issues and providing students with supports rather than removal. Building on these efforts to shift school culture, Open Society Institute-Baltimore, in collaboration with Baltimore City Public Schools, Family League of Baltimore, and the Baltimore School Climate Collaborative, adopted a plan in 2017 to implement restorative justice practices in all Baltimore City Schools within five years. "The use of restorative practices in schools has been shown to support effective leadership and engaging classrooms; develop positive relationships among all stakeholders; and create engaging classrooms and welcoming and safe school communities."



### ACTION STEP 4:

## Increase Public and Private Financial Investment to Build the **CAPACITY** of Public Schools

Educating a young person requires active engagement, and our federal, state and local resources must show up in a major way to assist educators in addressing and removing from our education systems centuries of inequities. If we do not provide our money, our voice, our advocacy, and other resources during the critical years of educating our children, we will find that our silence and lack of investment will be far more costly than the alternative.

For children to succeed, capacity must include the ability to provide high-quality early childhood education. However, despite the overwhelming evidence of its positive impact on academic success and other long-term outcomes, access to early childhood education continues to be out of reach for roughly 40% of children nationally, Federal programs that provide access to early childhood education need increased funding to meet the scale of need that exists. For the early childhood programs that do exist, they are in

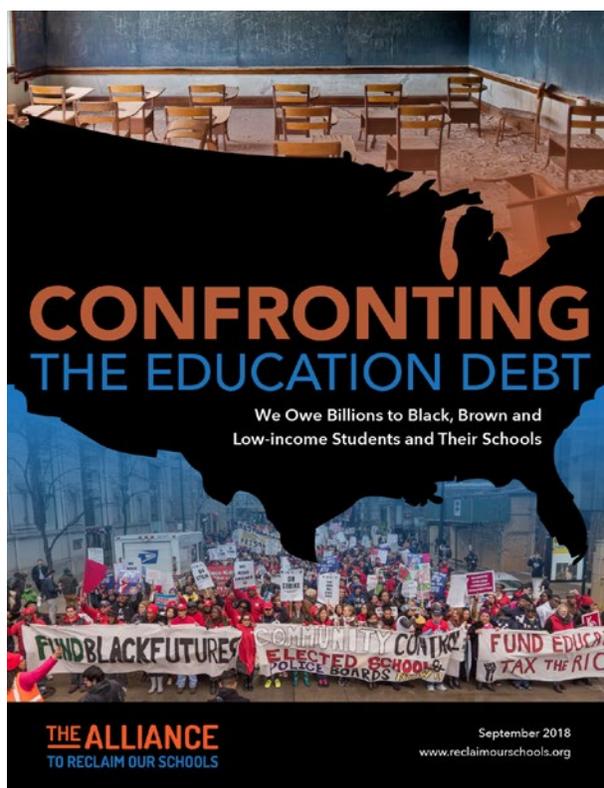
many ways further along than K-12 in adopting a holistic, whole-child approach to development. The BUILD Initiative is one of the leaders helping states build systems to support early childhood development. Their approach emphasizes building systems that provide access to quality early care and education as well as primary and preventative healthcare and early interventions. BUILD provides tools, resources, and data to help families and communities build coordinated, systemic responses for each of these early childhood development needs to ensure all children are on a path for a lifetime of learning. For more resources [click here](#).

We need to invest resources equitably in schools to ensure that all schools can provide a system of supports for all children, particularly those living in poverty. In the report [Is School Funding Fair? A National Report Card \(NRC\)](#), research shows that "the majority of states have unfair funding systems with "flat"

or “regressive” funding distribution patterns that ignore the need for additional funding in high-poverty districts.” Seventeen states have a “regressive” school funding policy, where less funding is provided to school districts with higher levels of student poverty, fueling deeper opportunity gaps in access to educational supports and failing to correct for the opportunity gaps in living environments. The NRC also labels many states like California, Utah, North Carolina, and Tennessee as “low effort” states, because they invest a low percentage of their economic capacity to support their public education systems. For data and resources to advocate for fair school funding, [click here](#).

In the report [Confronting the Education Debt](#), the Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools (AROS) documents the severe underfunding of Title 1 and IDEA, highlighting that since the inception of those federal laws Congress has failed to appropriate the funds that low-income students and their schools are legally entitled to. As a result, the country owes billions of dollars to Black, brown, and low-income students and their schools, contributing to the inequity in financially resourcing schools to provide high-quality education.

Addressing school financing needs and ensuring public education is adequately resourced at federal, state, and local levels, requires supporting community organizing capacity for education justice. Unfortunately, philanthropy dramatically under-resources community organizing and activism, especially when it comes to education justice work, and that lack of resources for the base-building, advocacy, and organizing work means that the voices and wishes of parents, students, and educators of color get overpowered by special interests, with education spending often being the first to get cut. In Massachusetts, the Schott Foundation has worked with Nellie Mae Education Foundation, Hyams Foundations and other funders to resource a coalition of organizations leading the charge to bring local com-



munities together under a single, statewide umbrella for education equity. This resourcing supported the launch and ongoing collaborative organizing by the Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance (MEJA), the only statewide community and labor alliance in the country with local chapters in several “Gateway Cities” and regions singularly focused on education justice. MEJA was a critical force in passing the landmark Student Opportunity Act in Massachusetts in November 2019, that guaranteed an additional \$1.5 billion in funding for K-12 public schools, and is working to pass the Fair Share Amendment to address formula adjustments to increase the proportion of dollars going to schools serving low-income students. This same work is needed in states all across the country and will require investment from philanthropic organizations to seed the organizing and advocacy work across communities of color that is needed to create major wins in public funding changes.

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