

STILL SEPARATE, STILL UNEQUAL

A CALL TO LEVEL THE UNEVEN
EDUCATION PLAYING FIELD IN ST. LOUIS

Excerpt: Segregation

A PRINTED COMPANION TO
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STL

FORWARD
THROUGH
FERGUSON

SEPTEMBER 2020



[7]

**STRUCTURAL INEQUITY:
SEGREGATION**

→ SEGREGATION

FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL POLICIES AND PRACTICES LED TO DE JURE AND THEN DE FACTO SEGREGATION IN OUR REGION AND SCHOOLS

BACKGROUND SUMMARY:

A long history of overtly racist federal, state, and local policies in our housing, transportation, and other systems followed by race neutral policies that did nothing to correct for the inequalities of their predecessors have created the landscape of inequality that we see today, and are the primary drivers of district wealth disparities.

TRI-COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT SEGREGATION SCORE IS NEARLY AS HIGH AS IT WAS BEFORE MEANINGFUL NATIONWIDE INTEGRATION EFFORTS IN THE 1960s

FINDINGS SNAPSHOT:

- + For the most part, St. Louis schools have grown more segregated over the past thirty years.
- + Dissimilarity Index (DI; a common measure of segregation) scores for our region's school districts largely stayed level during the 90s. However, as the VICC desegregation program waned, in large part because of the ending in 1999 of the official 1983 order, schools started slipping back towards re-segregation and DI scores increased.
- + In 2019, the tri-county (St. Louis City, County, and St. Charles County) public school district Dissimilarity Index score was 0.71, meaning 71% of Black or White students would have had to move districts for schools to reflect the underlying population.
- + Today, our region's schools are almost as segregated as the nation's schools were before meaningful integration took place. By comparison, in 1968, soon after *Brown v. Board* ruled segregated schools unconstitutional, but before most districts had moved to integrate, the Dissimilarity Index nationwide was about 0.80.
- + As a result of de facto (i.e., not legally mandated) segregation, 78% of public school students in the St. Louis region attend a racially concentrated school district, where the vast majority (75% or more) of enrollment is of one race. Even more Black students (85%) attend a racially concentrated school.

.80

1960 NATIONWIDE DISSIMILARITY INDEX BEFORE INTEGRATION

.71

2019 TRI-COUNTY DISSIMILARITY INDEX

78%

OF PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE ST. LOUIS REGION ATTEND A RACIALLY CONCENTRATED SCHOOL DISTRICT

SELECTED NEXT STEPS

- Grow broad community understanding of the structural inequities in St. Louis education including the historical and modern-day drivers of educational segregation from the individual up to the systemic level and cultivate an understanding of the approaches available at each level for facilitating integration, and capacity for directly or indirectly implementing those approaches.

BACKGROUND

As we saw in Section 6, our education landscape is deeply divided along racial and socioeconomic lines, with majority Black districts having access to a fraction of the property wealth found in majority White districts, especially districts in mid-County and West County. Why is that? What led to these patterns of concentrated wealth and Whiteness and vice-versa? In some ways, the answer is as simple as this: federal, state, and local policies made it exceedingly difficult for Black families to obtain property, and, when they did, if that property became too valuable, local forces used their authority and power to take it. Ultimately, the wild unevenness in wealth and (as we'll see in section 8) quality in our school districts is rooted in a history of racism and public policy, and, as a result, economic decline.

HOUSING POLICY, NATIONALLY AND LOCALLY, HAS A LONG HISTORY OF RACISM...

For as long as Black individuals have had the right to own land, there have been limitations and

conditions constraining that freedom to suit the preferences of White lawmakers and property owners. For a period, namely during the era of the New Deal, many federal, state, and local housing policies were explicitly racist. One of the starkest examples of this is the establishment of the Federal Housing Administration in 1934. The FHA is the primary way in which the federal government catalyzes home ownership. It is credited with suburbanizing America and helping to build the (White) middle class. However, for decades, it worked explicitly on the behalf of White Americans: Black homebuyers were not eligible for FHA-backed loans or received far less favorable terms. Arguing that Black home ownership in or even near burgeoning suburbs would drive down the property values of the White-owned homes they were insuring, the FHA drew maps of metropolitan areas⁵¹ in the country color-coding Black neighborhoods red to indicate that they were too risky to insure. It demanded developers build walls⁵² to keep Black individuals from crossing over into White neighborhoods. It insisted on the inclusion of restrictive covenants⁵³ in the deeds for the properties they insured to guarantee that the homes would never be sold to

Black individuals. The policies implemented at a national level by the FHA and other bodies set the tone for state and local policies that nurtured the racist beliefs held by countless individuals.

As historian Colin Gordon points out,⁵⁴ St. Louis was, in fact, a national leader in segregationist innovation. In the early 1900s, St. Louis was one of a few cities to formalize racial segregation with the so-called St. Louis Law. The boilerplate language used by the St. Louis Real Estate Exchange in their contracts outlining who could own the properties they sold included “a restriction against selling, conveying, leasing, or renting to a negro or negroes, or the delivery of possession, to or permitting to be occupied by a negro or negroes of said property.” Such restrictive covenants were found unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1948 because of the St. Louis case, *Shelley v. Kraemer*. But the segregation they created was sustained by private discrimination in real estate and lending, and by public policies such as local land-use zoning.

The homes and neighborhoods the FHA helped develop went on to be the primary vehicle to the middle class for their

owners and their families. Affordably priced at twice the median national income in 1950, today they are worth six to eight times the national median income. That increase in equity sent kids to college. It sheltered owners from financial storms as they aged. It served as a springboard for the next generation's ambitions. These were advantages that were uniquely—and intentionally—afforded to White homeowners. They are major drivers of why, today, Black wealth is one tenth the size of White wealth.⁵⁵

...THE INTERSTATE SYSTEM HAS A LONG HISTORY OF RACISM, TOO

Highways, the FHA urged in its *Underwriting Manual*, were a great way of separating Black neighborhoods from White neighborhoods. The interstate highway system was created in the 1950s and 1960s. While the federal government took on most of the costs, local officials were often able to influence the paths. In metropolises across the country,⁵⁶ those expressways, highways, and interstates were frequently pointed right through “blighted”, majority Black, low-income neighborhoods, displacing millions.⁵⁷ St. Louis was no exception.⁵⁸ To build Interstate 55, the Black neighborhood of Pleasant View was razed. Interstate 44 pushed Black families out of The Hill and demolished parts of Meacham Park, an established Black neighborhood in Kirkwood.

LET'S GO BACK TO BRENTWOOD FOR A SECOND

Those transportation thoroughfares also shunted economic activity towards some areas, away from others, and directly through still others. Remember the Brentwood School District, home to just under 800 mostly White, wealthy students? It wasn't always that way. At the intersection of Eager Road and Brentwood Boulevard, where you

now will find a bustling commercial hub, was once the Black neighborhood of Howard-Evans place. Established in 1907,⁵⁹ Howard-Evans Place predated the Great Migration and was home to the workers of the Evens & Howard Fire Brick Co and their families. Recalled⁵⁹ as one of the first places a Black family could buy a new home in St. Louis, it went on to become a bastion of the Black middle class. By the 1970s, because of its prime location, Howard-Evans Place had captured the attention of others. Highway expansion, redevelopment plans, and Metrolink expansion all threatened the neighborhood multiple times starting in 1977. Finally, in 1995, the neighborhood association agreed to a buyout, leading to the development of Brentwood Promenade.

When the buyout took place, the City of Brentwood valued the property of Howard-Evans Place at \$3.6 million.⁵⁹ After Brentwood Promenade was developed, it was valued at \$30 million.⁵⁹ The Promenade also encouraged an additional \$300 million⁵⁹ in development in Brentwood over the next five years, including the redevelopment of Brentwood Square Town Center, Brentwood Pointe, and the Villas at Brentwood. Today, the economic benefits of that thriving retail center are enjoyed almost solely by the small and affluent Brentwood school district.

A similar pattern of Black displacement to allow for development that disproportionately benefits White St. Louisans has been repeated throughout the region, from Clayton,⁶⁰ to Mill Creek Valley,⁶¹ to Meacham Park.⁶²

SCHOOLS BOTH CONTRIBUTE TO AND ARE IMPACTED BY SEGREGATION

Schools were part and parcel of the overt and implicit ways in which racial lines were drawn in our region; indeed, they were among the last

of our institutions to desegregate. While *Brown v. Board of Education* found segregated schools to be unconstitutional in 1954, it took decades for desegregation to actually happen. This led to a second ruling by the Supreme Court in 1955, often called *Brown II*, that ordered states to integrate with “all deliberate speed,” which in practice was vague enough to allow segregationist states to delay. Missouri dragged its feet until it removed the language from its constitution in 1976⁶³—22 years after *Brown v. Board of Education* and longer than most states in the south. (If you’re wondering, some states, like Alabama, still officially require racially segregated public education⁶⁴ under state law). While the Supreme Court decision invalidated these portions of state constitutions, their continued existence long after the nationwide order banning segregation points to an unwillingness to let go of formalized structures for excluding Black students. Meaningful desegregation in St. Louis only occurred years later in 1983 with the implementation of an inter-district transfer program, over a decade after a court

decision on the pivotal 1972 case of *Liddell v. Board of Education of City of St. Louis*.⁶⁵

The suit argued that Black students enrolled in SLPS received a lower quality education. While school boundary lines were constantly being redrawn, they always kept Black children in Black schools and segregated classrooms. The case moved through the court system for the next two decades. In 1980, the judge overseeing the case proposed a voluntary exchange program between City and County districts. This required the support of county school districts, which many only gave when the overseeing judge threatened to consolidate City and County school districts. In 1983, a voluntary agreement was reached and approved by all 23 districts—though notably North County majority-Black districts were excluded from the exchange program—and was implemented by the Voluntary Interdistrict Coordinating Council (VICC). Pushback from the state on its culpability and financial responsibility extended the case for another decade, and, while



the VICC program was up and running throughout that time, it wasn't until 1993 that all parties in the lawsuit came to an agreement. Around the same time, the Supreme Court handed down its verdict on *Missouri v. Jenkins*, which invalidated the inter-district desegregation strategy in Kansas City. Fearing that the state of Missouri would finally get its way and end the VICC program through the courts, the parties from the *Liddell* case agreed to a second settlement agreement. The VICC program was cemented through 2008-09 (and renewed in 2007, 2012, and 2016, for likely the last time⁶⁶) and became the largest and longest running⁶⁷ desegregation program in the country. The magnet school program was also born out of the agreement.

The backdrop to the *Liddell* case was the 1974 Supreme Court case *Milliken v. Bradley*, which is credited for allowing schools to remain segregated when it found that segregation was allowed if it was not explicitly stated in policy.

“RACE NEUTRAL” IS NOT NEUTRAL

In the wake of the Civil Rights Act and other landmark legislation like the Fair Housing Act and jurisprudence like *Brown v. Board of Education*, we have seen a shift away from overtly (de jure) racist policy. But striking down those policies did not undo the damage they did—the inequalities they planted. Left untreated, those inequalities have flourished, fertilized by the benign neglect and passive acceptance of current day “race neutral” policies. As a result, the patterns we see in health,⁶⁸ wealth,⁶⁹ and well-being⁷⁰ in the St. Louis region bear a haunting resemblance to the redlining maps of decades ago.

WHAT WE LOOKED AT

DISTRICT DEMOGRAPHICS

SOURCE: MO DESE

- + **% BLACK**
THE PERCENT OF 2018-2019 ENROLLMENT THAT WAS BLACK
- + **% WHITE**
THE PERCENT OF 2018-2019 ENROLLMENT THAT WAS WHITE
- + **% LATINX**
THE PERCENT OF 2018-2019 ENROLLMENT THAT WAS HISPANIC
- + **% FRL**
THE PERCENT OF 2018-2019 ENROLLMENT THAT QUALIFIED FOR FREE OR REDUCED PRICE LUNCH
- + **% ENGLISH LEARNER**
THE PERCENT OF 2018-2019 ENROLLMENT WHOSE native language is not English³⁷
- + **% SPECIAL EDUCATION**
THE PERCENT OF STUDENTS IN 2018-2019 WITH INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS (IEPS) DUE TO INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY, EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE, SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY, OTHER HEALTH IMPAIRMENT, AUTISM, OR SPEECH/LANGUAGE IMPAIRMENT

SEGREGATION

- + **DISSIMILARITY INDEX**
THE MOST COMMONLY USED MEASURE OF SEGREGATION APPLIED TO THE TRI-COUNTY REGION, ST. LOUIS COUNTY, AND ST. CHARLES COUNTY, WITH SCHOOL DISTRICTS AS THE UNIT OF ANALYSIS. YEARS OF ANALYSIS WERE 1991-2019. SEE NOTE BELOW FOR ADDITIONAL EXPLANATION. SOURCE: CALCULATED FROM HISTORICAL ENROLLMENT DATA PROVIDED BY MO DESE
- + **BLACK AND WHITE MIGRATION PATTERNS**
THE NUMBER OF BLACK AND WHITE PEOPLE LIVING IN EACH SCHOOL DISTRICT IN ST. LOUIS CITY AND COUNTY FROM 1950 TO 2010, MAPPED BY CENSUS TRACT. CREDIT: COLIN GORDON. SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS
- + **RACIAL CONCENTRATION**
WHETHER A SCHOOL DISTRICT WAS MADE UP OF 75%+ enrollment⁷¹ OF A SINGLE RACE IN 2018-2019. SOURCE: MO DESE

MORE ABOUT THE DISSIMILARITY INDEX

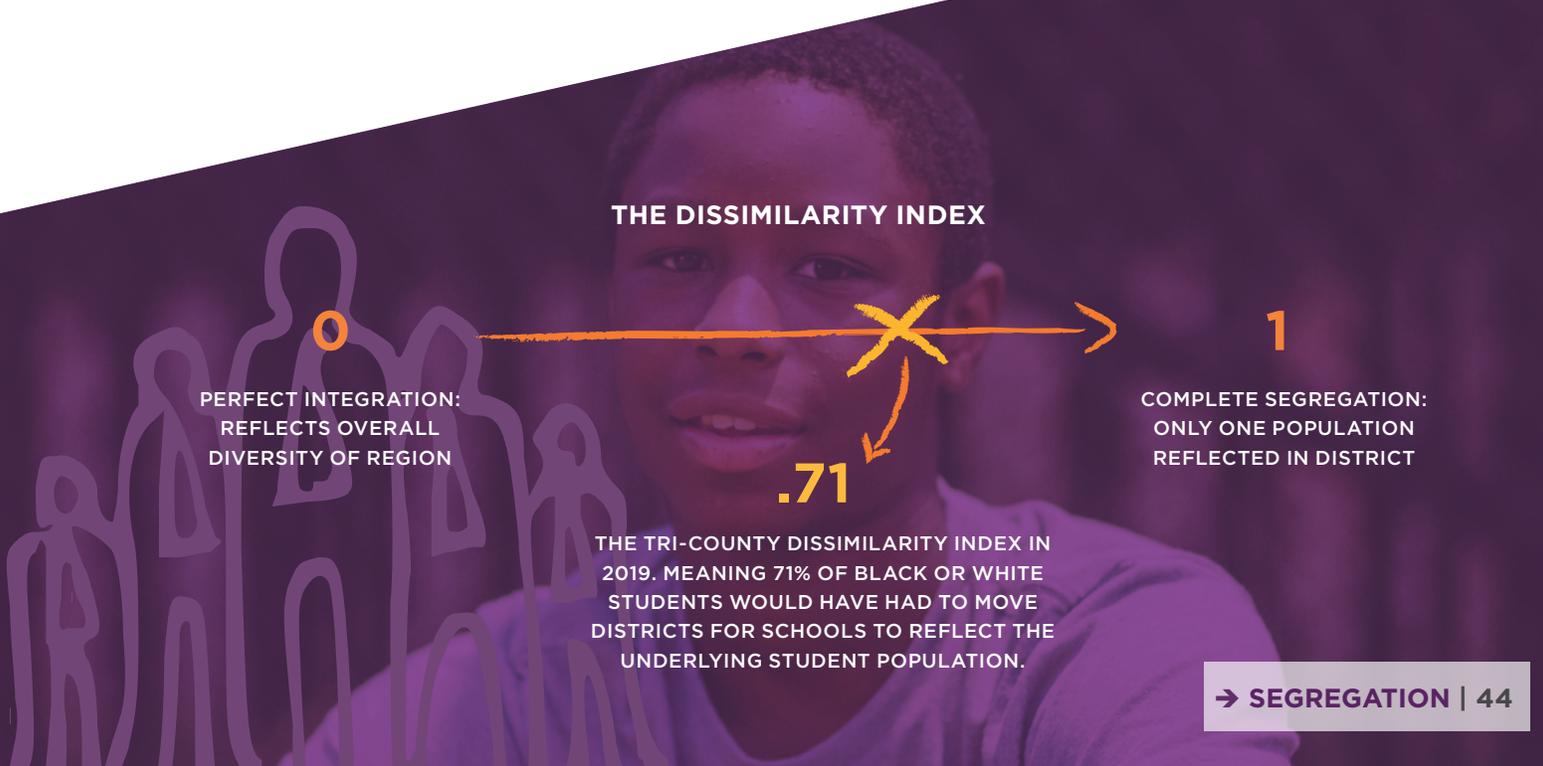
Segregation can be measured in several ways. In fact, the concept of segregation has been broken down into 5 fundamental dimensions⁷²: evenness, exposure, concentration, centralization, and clustering. Evenness is probably what most people think of when they define segregation. It refers to the way different sub-populations are physically distributed in a space, be it a city, a state, or a school district. Populations are less segregated when sub-populations are more evenly distributed. The most commonly used indicator of evenness is the Dissimilarity Index⁷³ (DI). The DI looks at the sub-population makeup of sub-divisions in the overall geography being studied. It measures the percentage of a sub-population that would have to move for each sub-division to have the same population breakdown as the overall geography. The index ranges from 0.0 (perfect integration: the sub-divisions perfectly reflect the diversity of the overall region) to 1.0 (complete segregation: the sub-divisions contain only one sub-population).

For our analyses, we considered counties and the school districts they are made up of. We calculated Dissimilarity Index values for the public school districts in St. Louis County, St. Charles County; the combination of St. Louis City and St. Louis County; and the tri-county region made up of St. Louis City,

St. Louis County, and St. Charles County. Using data from MO DESE, we calculated DI scores for each of these geographies for the years from 1991 to 2019. Because St. Louis City is made up of a single public school district, we could not calculate a Dissimilarity Index score for it alone.

Because we used school districts as the unit of analysis, our DI calculations do not take into account what was happening between schools within a district or outside of the public school system. That means some dynamics we only see indirectly. For example, if a new charter school opened, its numbers would not directly be incorporated into our calculations, but we might be able to observe the effect of that opening because of the students who *left* the public school system and the decline in enrollments as a result. Other dynamics we are unable to detect at all. For example, students moving from private schools to charters or vice versa wouldn't be captured in our analyses.

Nonetheless, the DI scores provide an informative snapshot of segregation in our public schools during the peak of the VICC program in the late 90s, the decline of that program in the 2000s, and the triggering of the transfer law in the 2010s (more about this in Section 8).



WHAT WE FOUND

→ SEGREGATION

For the most part, our schools have grown **more segregated** over the past thirty years.

This graph shows Dissimilarity Index (DI) scores for the region based on public school districts. DI scores tell us what percent of Black or White students would have to move for school districts to reflect the racial diversity in the underlying population. Scores range from 0 to 1, with 0 indicating perfect integration and 1 indicating complete segregation. **DI scores over 0.6 are considered high levels of segregation.**

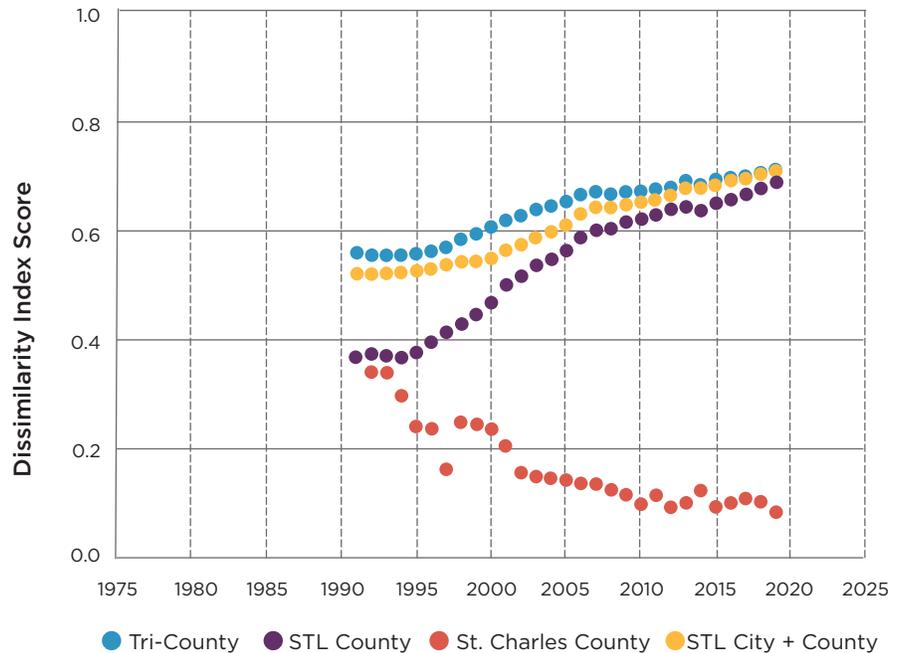
The VICC desegregation program began enrolling students in 1983 and, by 1999, it had **reached its peak, enrolling 14,000 students.** Most of those students were Black, from the City, and using the program to go to school in the County.

That program is probably why, **until about 2000, dissimilarity index scores remained pretty level** in St. Louis City + County.

As the VICC program waned, in large part because of the ending in 1999 of the official 1983 order, schools started **slipping back towards re-segregation and DI scores increased.**

FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL POLICIES AND PRACTICES LED TO DE JURE AND

SEGREGATION IS GROWING IN MOST OF THE REGION'S SCHOOL DISTRICTS DISSIMILARITY INDEX, 1991-2019



DI scores have trended steadily upward in most of the region. St. Charles County is an exception. Because it is quite homogenous and White, small movements of Black students into its schools lead to large improvements in DI scores.

1954
Brown v. Board
The Supreme Court overturns the "separate but equal" doctrine and orders public school integration "with all deliberate speed."

1972
Liddell v. Board
Minnie Liddell and the Concerned Parents of North St. Louis sue to desegregate the St. Louis Public Schools.

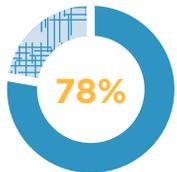
1983
Voluntary Inter-district Transfer Plan
St. Louis County school districts agree to a voluntary inter-district transfer program with the city, financed by the state.

1963
Intact Busing
A practice by which children in majority-Black schools were bussed to empty classrooms in majority white schools, but kept separated.

1980
Court-Ordered Desegregation
On appeal, the judge in *Liddell v. Board* finds the city and state guilty of maintaining school segregation and requires the creation of a desegregation plan.

THEN DE FACTO SEGREGATION IN OUR SCHOOLS AND REGION

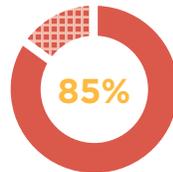
THE VAST MAJORITY OF OUR STUDENTS ATTEND A RACIALLY CONCENTRATED SCHOOL DISTRICT
 ENROLLMENT IN RACIALLY CONCENTRATED SCHOOLS, OVERALL AND BY RACE, 2018-2019



Of all students attended a racially concentrated school district



Of White students attended a racially concentrated school district



Of Black students attended a racially concentrated school district

Racially Concentrated

- Jennings
- Riverview Gardens
- Normandy Schools
- Ferguson-Florissant
- University City
- SLPS
- Hazelwood
- Webster Groves
- Kirkwood
- Rockwood
- AfftonOrchard Farm
- Mehlville
- Francis Howell
- Wentzville
- Fort Zumwalt
- Lindbergh Schools

Not Racially Concentrated

- Ritenour
- Pattonville
- Hancock Place
- Brentwood
- Valley Park
- Maplewood - Richmond Heights
- Parkway
- Clayton
- Ladue
- St. Charles
- Bayless

2010

Turner v. Clayton

Loss of accreditation at St. Louis Public Schools in 2007 invokes the Missouri transfer law and creates friction with the existing VICC program.

2016

Final VICC Extension

New enrollments in VICC are allowed to continue through the 2023-24 school year, after which the program will end.



1990s



2000s



2010s



2020s

1999

2nd VICC Settlement Agreement

Although school district participation in VICC becomes voluntary and the state no longer finances it, VICC continues.

2014

Normandy Schools Collaborative

Loss of accreditation at Normandy invokes the Missouri transfer law and prompts the creation of a not-yet-accredited district under state oversight.

In 2019, the tri-country **dissimilarity index score was 0.71** meaning 71% of Black or White students would have had to move districts for schools to reflect the underlying student population.

By comparison, in 1968, soon after *Brown v. Board of Education* ruled segregated schools unconstitutional, but before most districts had moved to integrate, the dissimilarity index nationwide was about 0.80.

Today, our region's schools are **almost as segregated as the nation's schools were before meaningful integration** took place.

As a result of de facto (i.e., not legally mandated) segregation, **78% of public school students attended a racially concentrated school district**, where 75% or more of enrollment is of one race. **Even more Black students (85%) attended a racially concentrated school.**

17 out of the 28 school districts we examined were racially concentrated.

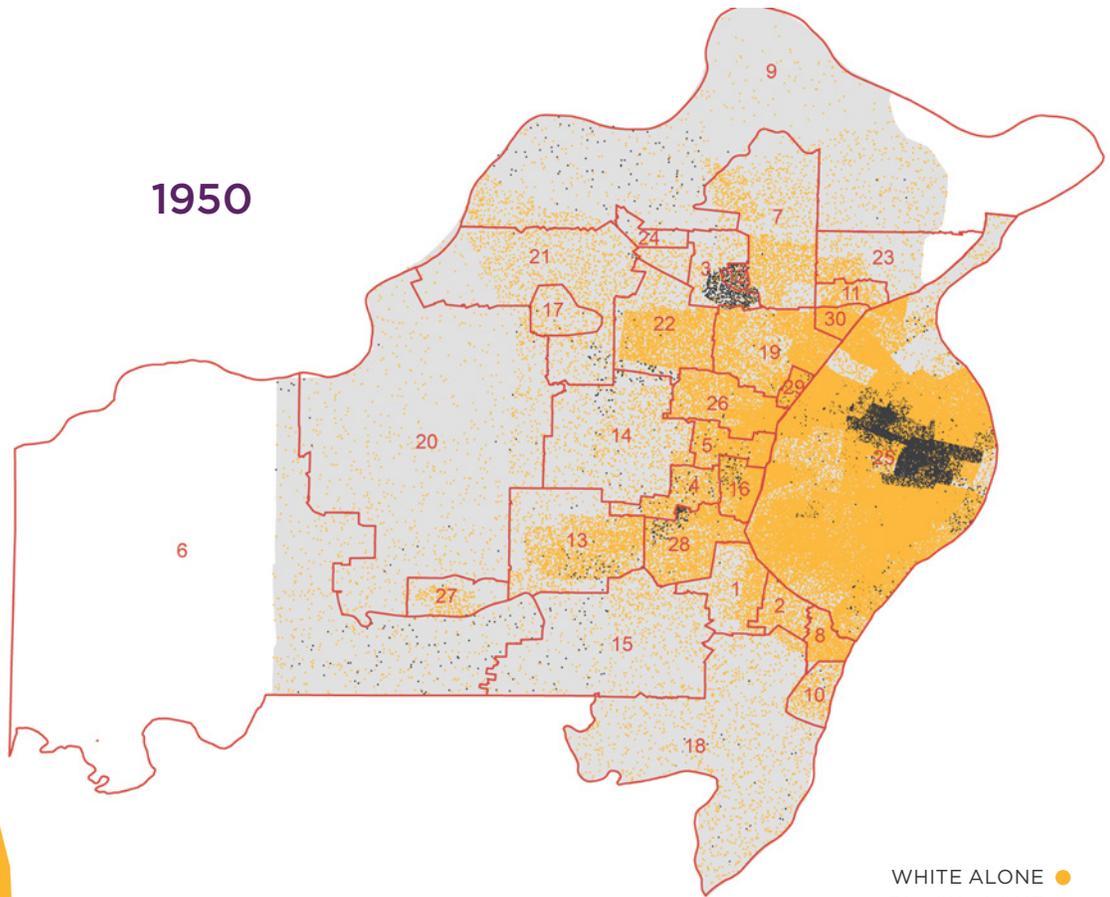
WHITE FLIGHT HOLLOWED OUT ST. LOUIS CITY

Population maps shown in the figure below produced by Colin Gordon use U.S. Census data from 1950 to 2010 and concurrent school district lines to show how Black and White individuals moved throughout St. Louis City and St. Louis County and beyond. As Dr. Gordon explains,⁷⁴ in the 50s and 60s we see the terrible influence of overtly racist housing policies that dictated where Black homeowners were allowed to live, brought to life by the individual practices of real estate agents, developers, and White home owners. Many White individuals and families left the City during these years. As the decades rolled by, “race neutral” policies, like zoning ordinances that prohibited multi-family housing units, replaced racist policies

but did little to correct for the segregation that had taken root—segregation that was now self-sustaining. The City continued to bleed population. Between 1970 and 1980, it lost almost 170,000 people, over 25% of its population. Black residents continued to spread, following the opportunity taken by fleeing White residents. They settled largely in north St. Louis City, south St. Louis City, and north St. Louis County. Few made it to the privileged reaches of west County. The White population continued moving farther out from the City, to the western edge of St. Louis County and beyond. This trend has continued. As of the 2010 census, St. Charles County had grown by 27% since 2000 and had a larger population than the City.

1950 DISTRICTS

1. AFFTON
2. BAYLESS
3. BERKELEY
4. BRENTWOOD
5. CLAYTON
6. EUREKA
7. FERGUSON-FLORISSANT
8. HANCOCK PLACE
9. HAZELWOOD
10. JEFFERSON BARRACKS
11. JENNINGS
12. KINLOCH
13. KIRKWOOD
14. LADUE
15. LINDBERGH-GRANDVIEW
16. MAPLEWOOD-RICHMOND HEIGHTS
17. MARYLAND HEIGHTS
18. MEHLVILLE
19. NORMANDY
20. PARKWAY CONSOLIDATED
21. PATTONVILLE
22. RITENOUR
23. RIVERVIEW GARDENS
24. SCUDDER
25. ST. LOUIS
26. UNIVERSITY CITY
27. VALLEY PARK
28. WEBSTER GROVES
29. WELLSTON
30. WEST WALNUT MANOR

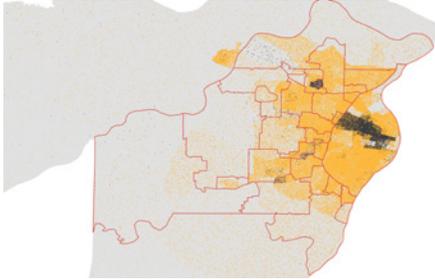


ONE DOT = TEN PERSONS, MAPPED BY CENSUS TRACT

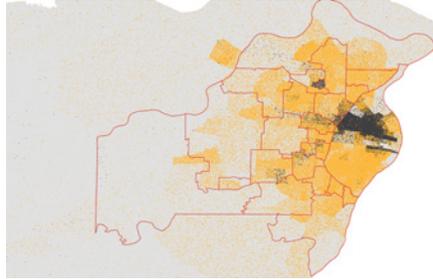
**** NOT ALL OF ST. LOUIS COUNTY ASSIGNED CENSUS TRACTS IN 1950

WHITE FLIGHT LEADS TO THE ABANDONMENT OF ST. LOUIS CITY

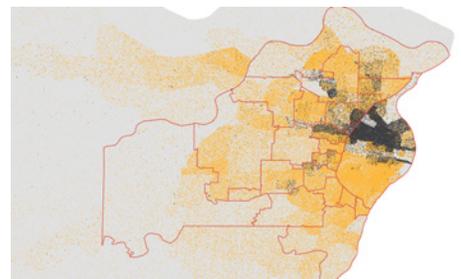
1960



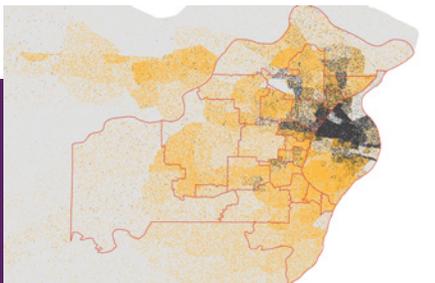
1970



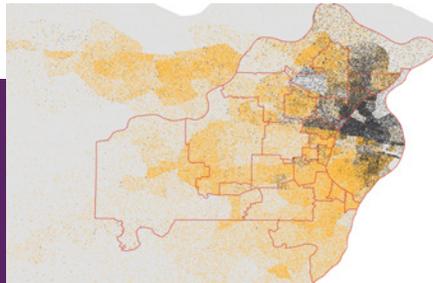
1980



1990



2000

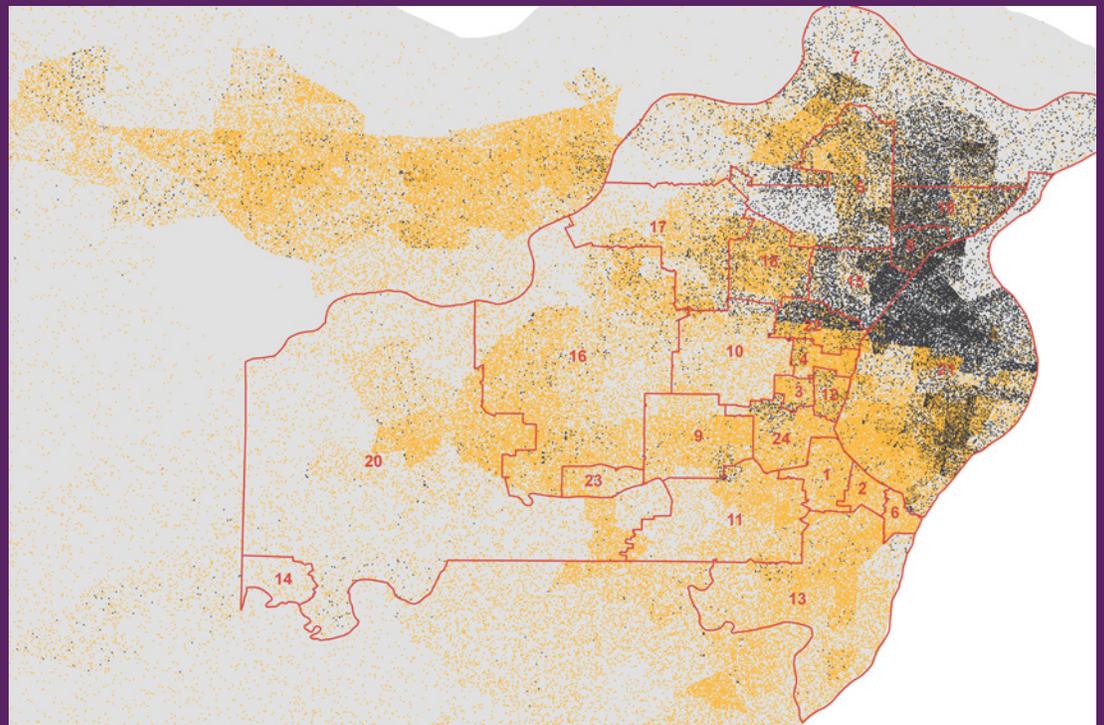


Credit: Colin Gordon. See additional maps and explanation from Dr. Gordon at <http://mappingdecline.lib.uiowa.edu/map/> and in the books referenced at the end of this section.

2010

2010 DISTRICTS

1. AFFTON
2. BAYLESS
3. BRENTWOOD
4. CLAYTON
5. FERGUSON-FLORISSANT
6. HANCOCK PLACE
7. HAZELWOOD
8. JENNINGS
9. KIRKWOOD
10. LADUE
11. LINDBERGH
12. MAPLEWOOD-RICHMOND HEIGHTS
13. MEHLVILLE
14. MERAMEC VALLEY
15. NORMANDY
16. PARKWAY
17. PATTONVILLE
18. RITENOUR
19. RIVERVIEW GARDENS
20. ROCKWOOD
21. ST. LOUIS
22. UNIVERSITY CITY
23. VALLEY PARK
24. WEBSTER GROVES



SCHOOL DISTRICTS GENERALLY GREW MORE SEGREGATED DESPITE VICC

We pick up this story in the early 1990s in our school districts. As our analysis of Dissimilarity Index (DI) scores shows, for the most part, our schools have grown more segregated over the past thirty years. DI scores measure the percent of the population that would have to move to create (in our case) school districts that reflect the racial diversity of the region. Scores range from 0 to 1, with 0 indicating perfect integration and 1 indicating complete segregation; scores over 0.6 are considered high levels of segregation.⁷⁵

In 1991, the tri-county region (St. Louis City, St. Louis County, and St. Charles County), had a DI score of 0.56. About 1 in 2 Black or White students would have had to change school districts to create a public education landscape that modeled the diversity of the public school students living in those three counties. Reading between the lines, we see that the high levels of segregation for the region overall were driven, in 1991, by racial unevenness in St. Louis City and St. Charles County. The DI score for St. Louis County

was actually considerably lower at 0.36, due in large part to a relatively large Black population that was more distributed. That changed, though. In the ensuing years, White students continued to leave St. Louis City. Many kept going through St. Louis County, settling in St. Charles County.

This White flight further segregated schools in St. Louis City and County, driving the DI scores up for this subset of the region. St. Charles County's school districts were almost entirely White in 1991. In fact, Black enrollments were so low in some districts, like Francis Howell, the largest district in St. Charles, that they could not be counted without compromising privacy. When Francis Howell enrolled 204 Black students in 1992, the DI score for all of St. Charles County dropped from 0.52 to 0.34. Over the past 30 years, St. Charles County's DI scores have dropped as the County's Black population slowly grew. Today, there are about 4,200 Black students across all of the public schools in St. Charles County. There are nearly 89,000 Black school-aged children in the region.

We can't fully celebrate St. Charles County school districts' low segregation scores because they disguise the fact that most Black students are still segregated away from those

districts to begin with. There's even less to celebrate in St. Louis City and County.

Despite the efforts of the VICC desegregation program, Black and White enrollments in public school districts in the City and County have grown more uneven in the past 30 years. The VICC program began enrolling students in 1983 and, by 1999, it had reached its peak, enrolling 14,000 students. Most of those students were Black, from the City, and using the program to go to school in the County. That program is probably why, until about 2000, Dissimilarity Index scores remained pretty level in St. Louis City + County. As the VICC program waned, in large part because of the ending in 1999 of the official 1983 order, schools started slipping back towards re-segregation and DI scores increased. The school districts in north St. Louis County were not part of the VICC program and those districts have largely remained intensely segregated.

SCHOOLS ARE NEARLY AS SEGREGATED TODAY AS IN 1968, BEFORE DESEG

In 2019, the tri-county Dissimilarity Index score was

0.71 meaning 71% of Black or White students would have had to move districts for schools to reflect the underlying student population. As a result of de facto (i.e., not legally mandated) segregation, 78% of public school students attended a racially concentrated school district, where 75% or more of enrollment is of one race. Even more Black students (85%) attended a racially concentrated school. 17 out of the 28 school districts we examined were racially concentrated.

By comparison, in 1968, soon after *Brown v. Board* ruled segregated schools unconstitutional, but before most districts had moved to integrate, the Dissimilarity Index nationwide was about 0.80.² Today, our region's schools are almost as segregated as the nation's schools were before meaningful integration took place. And as *Brown v. Board* unequivocally stated in 1954,⁷⁶ "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."



RESOURCES FOR LEARNING MORE ABOUT THESE TOPICS

- **Citizen Brown**, 2019. By Colin Gordon.
- **The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America**, 2017. By Richard Rothstein.
- **Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America**, 2018. By Robert Nelson and colleagues.
- **Mapping Decline: St. Louis and the Fate of the American City**, 2009. Colin Gordon.



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