

# UC Riverside

## UCR Honors Capstones 2021-2022

### Title

EXPLORING EDUCATION BASED DISPARITIES IN TWO ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN THE SAME INLAND EMPIRE SCHOOL DISTRICT

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/832384j5>

### Author

Foley, Kendell A

### Publication Date

2022-05-06

### Data Availability

The data associated with this publication are not available for this reason: N/A

EXPLORING EDUCATION BASED DISPARITIES IN TWO ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN  
THE SAME INLAND EMPIRE SCHOOL DISTRICT

By

Kendell Ann Foley

A capstone project submitted for Graduation with University Honors

May 6, 2022

University Honors  
University of California, Riverside

APPROVED

Dr. Amos Lee  
School of Education

Dr. Richard Cardullo, Howard H Hays Jr. Chair  
University Honors

## ABSTRACT

Through this research project, I explored the inequities that exist between different elementary schools that belong to the same Inland Empire school district. This area of research is significant because oftentimes inequities are examined across different school districts, but rarely are the inequities between schools in the same district studied in depth. I use qualitative methods to analyze documents related to the schools and the district to better understand the socio-political context in which these disparities exist and operate. I analyzed district meeting notes, school accountability reports, funding documents and achievement scores to better understand the conditions and demographics that make up each of the schools. Using a historical approach, I also explain both how and why these funding inequities exist in schools based on racial demographic of students and geographic location in the community. My findings suggest that school based inequities are deeply rooted in racism and the lack of commitment towards schools that are majority students of color is not by accident. From these findings, allowing disparities to be normalized in schools based in the same district is dangerous and there is a need to restructure the ways in which districts treat the schools under their care.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to first and foremost thank my advisor for this project, Dr. Amos Lee. The advice and mentorship Dr. Lee has provided over the last two years of this research process has been invaluable to me. Dr. Lee has patiently guided me throughout the entire process and his passion about the search for equality in education is inspiring. I would also like to appreciate my mother, who has been a hard working educator that helped provide guidance during the research process. She was my soundboard and she helped me search and decipher endless district documents. I would also like to acknowledge the professors in the School of Education at University of California, Riverside. Although these professors were unaware of the research I was conducting, their classes introduced me to many important concepts and researchers. The School of Education strives to create educators who are aware of the unequal conditions and fight for equality, and each professor I have has played a role in inspiring this research.

## **Introduction**

Racial Inequality has existed in the United States education system since the system was first created. Although we would like to believe racial inequality is a thing of the past, schools today are more racially segregated than ever before (Orfield & Frankenburg, 2014). In 2016, 45% of the nation's Black and Latinx public school students attended high-poverty schools (based on federal eligibility criteria for free and reduced-price school lunch) while only 8% of White students attended high-poverty schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).

Over time, racial inequality in education has resulted in social, geographical, political and academic disparities between Black and Latinx students compared to their white counterparts (Ladson-Billings, 2006). These disparities have become known as the education debt, and as funding inequalities continue to exist between low income and high income schools, the education debt worsens. The education debt is created by systemic inequalities that have denied access to quality education for hundreds of years (Darling-Hammond, 2013). Therefore, we explore the intradistrict funding disparities that exist between two schools in the same district. While a school district as a whole may seem racially diverse, segregation still exists within these districts to keep Black and Latinx students separated from their White counterparts.

We explore the reasons why students from the same city experience two very different education environments because of their race and the neighborhoods they live in. We question the reasons behind why these educational inequalities exist. We explore the historical, geographical, racial and achievement-based reasons that contribute to funding inequalities that exist in the first place. We look at school board meetings, achievement scores and the communities in order to understand how two schools from the same city can create different educational outcomes. By looking at a school with a majority Latinx student population

compared to a majority White student population in the same school district, we are able to understand how racial preference comes into play when considering funding and learning opportunities. Through an understanding of the current meeting notes, accountability reports and the funding formulas that exist for schools, the goal of this paper is to propose potential ways forward to address funding inequalities that continue to exist.

### **Relevant Literature and Court Precedents**

Researchers have been studying the funding inequalities that exist between schools for decades. Although people hoped that *Brown v. Board of Education* would lead the education system towards racial desegregation and educational equity, segregation and opportunity gaps that exist 60 years later prove that is not the case. The assumption that equal education opportunities exist today reinforces the deficit beliefs that the causes of the achievement gaps are on the students of color, their families and their communities (Darling-Hammond, 2013). This deficit thinking places the blame on the students rather than the education system that serves them, which serves as justification for the disparities that exist between schools. This justification has become a dangerous thing, and it allows schools that serve students of color to have less qualified and less experienced teachers, fewer learning resources, limited curricula taught at less challenging levels and many other factors that affect their academic achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2013). Meanwhile, their white counterparts have more resources, higher rates of graduation and college attendance, more demanding courses and better facilities and equipment (Darling-Hammond, 2013).

### **Geography**

The neighborhood a child grows up in determines the quality of educational resources in their local school (Moses & Rogers, 2013). The segregation of students into separated groups

based on their race and economic background stems from a long history of social inequalities. Orfield explains that “segregation is a reality that everyone adjusts to” and that “school segregation resulting from housing patterns [...] is largely accepted as something natural, and a large majority of White Americans believe that nothing more need to be done to remedy the situation” (p. 42, 2013). Residential segregation is seen as something that is voluntary, but in reality it stems from a long history of racism.

Over the last few decades, there have been growing numbers of minorities moving into the cities, while White populations are moving into the suburbs (Orfield & Frankenburg, 2014). Therefore, schools that exist in the suburbs are high income schools with a majority White student population while schools in the cities are typically lower income schools with a majority Black and Latinx student populations. The combination of minority isolation, educational inequalities and racial bias deepens and solidifies inequality (Orfield, 2013). These funding inequalities begin to exist between lower income and higher income neighborhoods because most states in the nation, including California, use local property taxes to pay for their education (Darling-Hammond, 2013).

With that said, since richer areas are more expensive and thus able to accumulate more money from taxes, they are able to put more money into their schooling. States attempt to provide different types of grants and aid to lower income schools to try to relieve this income gap between low-income and high-income schools, but it is rarely enough to meet the needs of the low-income schools. In most states there is at least a 3-to-1 ratio between per pupil spending in the richest and poorest districts (Darling-Hammond, 2013). The vicious cycle of poverty has trapped their families in low income neighborhoods and low income schools are one of many tools to ensure that they are not able to escape the cycle (Noguera, 2011). The neighborhood a

child grows up in determines the quality of educational resources in their public school (Moses & Rogers, 2013). Low income schools become a tool to trap families in the cycle of poverty because these low income schools have less qualified teachers, less resources, and fewer chances for academically challenging curricula (Orfield & Frankenburg, 2014).

### **Student Achievement**

The student achievement gap that exists between lower income and higher income school exists for a variety of reasons. Once these students enter school, if they are placed in schools with majority Black and Latinx student populations that have less qualified and less experienced teachers, fewer learning resources, limited curricula taught at less challenging levels and many other factors that affect their academic achievement, it is unfair for educators to expect Black and Latinx students to have the same achievement scores as schools with majority white student populations. In the *Williams v. California* case filed in 2000, schools reported that they were not allowed to take textbooks home to do homework because their teachers did not have enough textbooks for all students, the schools were infested with vermin and roaches, the library had outdated books that were nearly 20 years old, the bathrooms and the Air Conditioning units did not work, and a large number of the teachers had not received a teaching credentials (Darling-Hammond, 2013).

The students that went to these schools were low-income Black and Latinx students. It is important to look at the racial and economic demographics of the schools because segregated minority schools are almost always schools with high concentrations of poverty (Darling-Hammond, 2013). These schools with concentrated poverty creates racial and economic segregation that furthermore reinforces disparities in educational quality. The education system forces students to learn in conditions like these and then question why they have low student



achievement levels. The schools are able to create conditions that place lower income minority students in low-income schools in the hopes of trapping them in a cycle of poverty. This cycle results in many low-income students growing up stuck in low-income communities with little chances of social mobility.

With limited chances of mobility, their future generations are stuck in this cycle filled with socioeconomic inequalities that include more than just academic achievement. The message from education policymakers was very clear: the legislation dictating that districts use local income taxes was intentionally devised as a weapon against low income students to keep them cornered in these inequalities. The long-term failure to provide solutions to these unequal conditions creates an education debt (Ladson-Billings, 2013). With almost 60 years since the *Brown v. Board*, education has replaced intentional racial segregation with economic segregation. Although it may not be obvious, a closer look at the funding schools receive versus their racial and economic demographics provide a very clear picture of the segregation that continues to exist in education. By using local taxes, the blame is diverted towards the communities surrounding the schools, rather than the education system itself.

### **Legal Precedents**

Since the historical court case *Brown v. Board of Education*, the fight for integrated, equal and equitable funding still continues almost 70 years later. The current battle is focused on ensuring that students receive the same equal funding and access to resources. Necochea and Cline explain that “the financing of elementary and secondary schools is probably the most controversial topic in the economics of education” (pg. 69, 1996). This is a topic that has only grown in controversy in California following the passing of Proposition 13. Unfortunately, cases like *Williams v. California* (2004) shed light on the drastic funding inequalities that continue to

exist in California schools. In the early 2000's students from Luther Burbank Middle School and 46 other schools from around the state were involved in a lawsuit, now known as *Williams v. California*, claiming that education officials violated the state and federal requirement to provide equal access to public education without regard to race, color, or national origin (Fontana, 2002). The goal of this case was not to achieve equality through integration, but rather "the plaintiffs argue that both California's constitution and case law require the State to provide all students with equal access to the fundamental tools of education--qualified teachers, proper instructional materials, and [...] uncrowded facilities in which to learn" (Oakes & Lipton, pg 25, 2004). The students in the lawsuit claimed they were attending schools that were infested with rodents, did not have working air conditioning, the restrooms were not operable, most teachers did not have credentials, and most students did not have access to textbooks. Unfortunately, the schools involved in the case shared one common trait: the student population was made up of Black and Latinx students. Most of these students also came from low socioeconomic backgrounds. In the end, *Williams v. California* resulted in a settlement that created a \$1 billion dollar grant in order to ensure that all students had necessary materials such as books (ACLU Southern California, 2022). The case also required that all students are able to learn in clean and safe environments and created necessary steps to ensure that every teacher was credentialed (ACLU Southern California, 2022).

Although many students and districts have attempted to ensure equal funding across districts by going to the California Supreme Court, not all of the attempts were successful. The historic court case *Serrano v. Priest* (1971) hoped to equalize the method that funds are provided to certain school districts in California, but was unsuccessful and California passed Proposition 13 shortly after (Fischel, 1996). Proposition 13 solidified and legalized funding of school

districts with local property taxes. From then on, the state funding of schools have majorly relied on local property taxes to fund schools. This led to students from wealthier areas to have more funding and resources for their schools, while students from lower income areas received less funding and resources. The passage of Proposition 13 has led to growing funding and achievement gaps in education.. This achievement gap has led to what Gloria Ladson-Billings (2006) calls an education debt, which has accumulated over the last few decades of inequitable education.

Ladson-Billings (2006) argues that this debt contains historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral components. As schools continue to ignore the funding issues that exist, the achievement gap and the education debt continue to increase. With funding being such a controversial topic, unfortunately many districts face difficult decisions “as to whether scarce resources will be divided equitably or whether the resources will be allocated to maintain high quality in certain schools” (Necochea & Cline, 1996, pg. 70). Equity seems like an option that is rarely on the table, and the focus of this paper is to explore funding inequalities that exist between majority Latinx schools and majority White schools. In 2013, Governor Jerry Brown passed a new piece of legislation that was intended to redesign the way that education was funded in California (EdSource, 2016). This new piece of legislation became known as the Local Control Funding formula and it “encompasses three broad principles: funding schools more equitably, based on student needs; making more decisions at a local level; and measuring school achievement using multiple metrics, not just test scores, and supporting schools so they improve rather than punishing them for failing” (Edsource, 2016).

One of the main goals of the new funding formula was to provide more equal funding for lower income schools and the achievement deficiencies that they may encounter in their

education. The funding formula allows each district to receive a uniform base amount per pupil and districts would then receive supplemental funding for “high needs students” such as English Learners, low income students and homeless or foster care students (EdSource, 2016). The formula is designed to work hand in hand with California districts to decrease the funding disparities that exist between low income and high income districts. The districts are each asked to create per pupil expenditure goals for each school year, and the Funding Formula is created to help reach those goals. The formula asks districts to make these targets and the formula will help the district work towards meeting these expenditure targets. The overall purpose is to get rid of the former funding formula and to provide supplemental funding and resources to the high needs students that need them. This new funding formula was thought to be a major step towards equitable funding. The program itself has not been able to generate the necessary amount of funding needed to successfully implement the Local Control Funding Formula. The most recent documentation is from 2016, which stated that they have received almost 80% of the funding needed, and they are working closely with districts to help each district meet their specific per pupil expenditure goals (EdSource, 2016).

On a more local level, in 2014 the Inland Empire voted on the passage of Measure 25 (pseudonym). The measure was part of many attempts to improve education. Measure 25 gave Inland Empire schools \$396 million in bonds to spend on improving neighborhood schools (Inland Empire School District, 2022) (pseudonym used). As written on the ballot, the goal of Measure 25 has been to:

“upgrade classrooms, science labs, computers, career-training technology to support high-quality instruction in math, science, engineering, technology/skilled trades, repair/replace leaky roofs, floors, plumbing/hazardous materials where needed, address overcrowding, improve student safety/security, repair, construct, acquire, equip classrooms, facilities/sites, by issuing \$396 million in bonds, at

legal rates, with citizen oversight, no administrator salaries, and all funds dedicated to improving local neighborhood schools”

This Measure has allowed schools to initiate many updates that they may have been unable to do for years. After looking at the meeting notes, schools around the district were finally able to update classrooms that have existed for decades, high schools were able to implement STEM programs, and schools were able to receive upgraded technologies like interactive whiteboards and projectors (Inland Empire School District, 2022). It’s also significant that there is a citizen oversight. The oversight board consists of people that do not work for the district in an effort to alleviate some bias. Overall, the Measure was not used to equalize funding between schools, but it was able to fund some upgrades that schools would not be able to do without the Measure.

### **Methods**

We used qualitative research methods to analyze documents related to the schools and the district in order to better understand the context in which these disparities exist. The goal of the research was to analyze many different district funding documents in order to understand the funding inequalities that exist between School 1, a low income majority Latinx school, and School 2, a higher income school with a large White student population. From the surface level, it is easy to see that these schools have drastic differences, but we wanted to look at the funding documents that publicly exist in order to fully understand the extent of funding inequalities. We also wanted to look at the influences the funding inequalities had on student achievement levels. We looked through public district documents such as Measure 25 Bill Meeting Notes, School Accountability Report Cards, California School Dashboard and Local Control Funding Formulas to gather as much information about each of the schools. These documents dated as far back as 2007 to 2022 in order to give us a greater understanding of the inequalities that existed from the

time School 2 opened to today. We looked at 30 documents and almost 500 pages to understand the academic, racial and economic realities that exist in these schools. We chose to look at these documents because they were released by the district in an attempt to provide a sense of accountability for their school conditions and their funding formulas. The Measure 25 Meeting Notes were focused more on the technologies and the building updates that each of the schools needed, since the bill is focused on funding the improvement of schools throughout the district. The School Accountability Report Cards provided information about per pupil expenditures, teacher salaries and student test scores on standardized tests. The California School Dashboard provided information about the student demographics. The Local Control Funding Formulas provided information about what the legislature was and the goals the districts were asked to create in order to strive towards educational equity. We also reviewed district websites for the data. In an attempt to be transparent, the district websites provided access to accountability reports and funding reports.

We predetermined some themes based on our literature. Based on the literature, we were looking for specific evidence of unequal academic outcomes, significant differences in student demographics, and evidence of funding disparities that existed between the two schools. We looked at achievement scores and compared the scores of the two schools. We looked at many different achievement test scores and compared the two in order to fully determine if there were unequal academic outcomes that existed between the two schools. To look for funding disparities, we looked to see what supplemental funding the schools received and looked to see if both schools were receiving the same funding. We were able to find per pupil expenditures that showed exactly how much each school was spending per student. We wanted to collect as much information about funding as we could in order to ensure that there were funding disparities. We

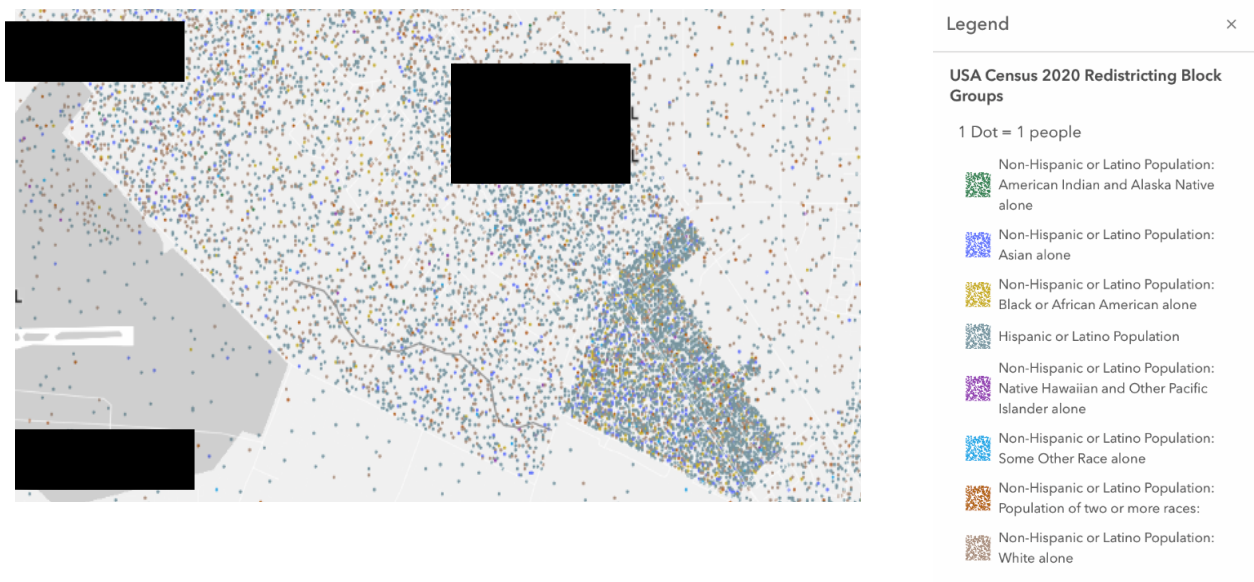
then reviewed the data and coded for these themes. Once we finished our thematic coding, we reviewed the codes and data to come to our major findings.

## Findings

### Setting the Stage: Looking at the communities surrounding the schools

The very first thing we wanted to look at was the racial demographics of the geographic locations surrounding the schools. The communities surrounding the schools display two very different environments. School 1 is placed in a lower income, majority Latinx neighborhood closer to the center of the city. School 2 is placed in a higher-income newly developed White-dominated suburban area.

**Figure 1: The community surrounding School 1** **Figure 2: The Legend for the maps**



*map and legend from [www.acrgis.com](http://www.acrgis.com)*

Based on the Legend provided (Figure 2), the neighborhood surrounding School 1 is majority Hispanic or Latinx. There are many colors that exist in the community, but the most prominent color is teal, which signifies Hispanic or Latinx population. Although it looks like there is a

densely packed neighborhood, because the school is located closer towards the center of the city the living situations are much more spaced out compared to School 2 (figure 3).

**Figure 2: The Legend for the maps**

**Figure 3: the community surrounding School 2**



*map and legend from [www.arcgis.com](http://www.arcgis.com)*

Unlike School 1, the community surrounding School 2 has a much more diverse community. There is no distinct color that stands out on the map. Many colors exist in the map, but after a closer glance the most common colors that exist are Black or African American, White and Asian. School 2 is placed in the suburbs in a relatively newer development, so the map shows the surrounding neighborhood and less people surrounding the neighborhood. These two maps show



the residential segregation that exists in the area. The residential segregation sets the stage for the racial segregation and funding disparities that will exist in the schools.

**Demographics of the Schools**

The Education School Profiles tell two very interesting stories about the schools. School 1, the low income school, is majority Latinx while School 2, the higher income school, has almost equal amounts of Latinx and White student population. Below is a chart of the schools Latinx, White and socioeconomically student population.

**Table 1- The Social Demographics of the two schools and the district**

	School 1	School 2	District
Latinx	77.9	38.8	53.6
White	12.7	32.6	22.5
Socioeconomically disadvantaged	56.7	29.4	45

*Demographics information from California Department of Education, 2022*

It is important to note that School 1 is above the district average for both their Latinx and socioeconomically disadvantaged student population. School 2 on the other hand is above the district average for White population and below the district average for both Latinx and socioeconomically disadvantaged populations. Although the higher income school does have some students that are socioeconomically disadvantaged, the other 70 percent of students are able to supplement the income levels necessary to become a higher priority for the district. The school also has nearly equal amounts of Latinx and White students, but the school has a large enough White student population and a relatively small enough socioeconomically disadvantaged student population to reap the benefits. The school has a large enough White population and socioeconomically advantaged student population to become a ‘worthy’

investment for the district. Darling-Hammond explains that most of these benefits exist because “upper income parents lobby more effectively for academic programs [...] and other supports and tolerate less neglect when it comes to building maintenance and physical amenities (pg. 84, 2013).

These disparities that exist between these schools are not by accident, they stem from a long history of racial and social segregation both in schools and in society as a whole. These racial and social disparities result from a lack of commitment towards schools that are majority students of color. These student demographics go onto define the funding the district chooses to allocate towards the schools and thus invest into the students.

### **School Funding**

The District website explained that they receive a large majority of their funding from Local Revenue (Inland Empire School District, 2022). In California, local revenue translates to local property taxes. The District website also explained that they also receive funding from the Education Protection Account State Aid before MSA. It was unclear what MSA meant, but the main takeaway was the confirmation that the district receives the majority of their funding from local property taxes. The schools within the districts are eligible to receive varying amounts of funding through grants and programs that seek to improve schools with low achievement scores or socioeconomically disadvantaged students. According to the newest Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), School 1 receives additional funding for a Teacher on Special Assignment, for their at-risk youth after school program, and for their Dual Immersion program (Inland Empire School District, 2022). The LCAP does not document any additional funding that goes towards School 2. The Local Control Funding Formula was created to ensure that districts were funded equitably, but little is said about ensuring that the schools within the districts are

funded equitably. Based on this document it seems as if the schools receive equal amounts of funding unless they qualify for additional funding.

Since the schools exist in the county that Measure 25 was passed in, School 1 and School 2 were both eligible to receive funding from the measure. With the passage of Measure 25, came a Community Oversight Committee to ensure that the funds were being used for their intended purpose (Inland Empire School District, 2022). After reviewing the meeting notes of every meeting since the formation of the Committee, we have learned many things. School 1, the lower income school, was mentioned numerous times. Measure 25 has allowed them to rebuild areas of their campus such as their Administration and Kindergarten buildings (Inland Empire School District, 2022). This construction is estimated to cost \$10 million and is set to complete in summer 2022 (Inland Empire School District, 2022). The is currently made up of temporary learning modulars and has not had any major construction since their opening in the 1980's. They have been waiting decades for construction, and the construction they are currently undergoing would most likely not be possible without the passage of Measure 25. The meeting notes also explained that in 2019, the measure was able to pay for School 1 to receive projectors (Inland Empire School District, 2022).. However, on their school website School 2 explains that they have had an abundance of technology such as projectors, interactive white boards, touch screen computers and white boards since they first opened in 2007.

It is hard to understand how it took the district over 10 years to find enough funding to ensure that both schools had equal amounts of technology. Measure 25 only explains that School 1 received projectors, nothing was said about interactive white boards, touchscreen computers or responders as well. Although they were able to get one useful piece of technology, they are still not close to being equals with School 2 in terms of technology. Measure 25 rarely mentions

School 2, the only time the school was mentioned was to say that they are receiving a technology upgrade in 2024 (Inland Empire School District, 2022). Based on the Measure 25 notes, most schools in the district do not have anywhere near the amount of technology that School 2 has, so it is hard to justify why an upgrade would be necessary while the rest of the district is still trying to receive the technologies School 2 has had since their opening 15 years ago. The inequities that exist both with the technology and the school buildings create unequal learning opportunities for the students. The inequalities that exist between the technological resources provides the students at School 2 better access to technologies that will exist in their future professional settings by providing the students with an opportunity to become fluent with professional skills they will use later such as their typing and presentation skills. This gap in technological resources comes off as intentional. It seems as if the district does not believe the students from lower income schools will go into professional fields, therefore they do not need to have access to the technologies that will teach them these professional skills. The technologies also make the classrooms and lessons more engaging, since students are able to utilize interactive white boards, touch screen computers and use responders to interact with the teacher. This would not only increase the student engagement, but it would allow more space for the teachers to creatively include the students in the lessons while preparing them for the professional and increasingly technological world.

School 1 is also considered a Title 1 School. Through this program they are able to receive supplemental funding that School 2 is not eligible to receive. The district website (2022) describes it as:

Title I is a federal program that provides supplemental funds to ensure that children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments. The intent of Title I funding is to meet

the educational needs of low-achieving students enrolled in the highest poverty schools and to close the achievement gap between high- and low-performing children. Title I funding is based on the percentage of students who qualify for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

Title I is a program that many schools in the district have, it is not a district-wide program. Schools have to have a certain percentage of students qualify for free and reduced lunch in order to receive the funding. Overall, this federal program acknowledges the correlation between income levels and student achievement. The supplemental funding is intended to support lower income students and provide funding that allows the schools to get funding necessary for additional support and resources. The point of the program is not to solve funding inequalities that exist between low income and high income schools, rather the program is intended to provide some financial support to lower income schools.

### **The Funding and Achievement Realities**

Although it is important that the district recognizes through supplemental funding and accountability reports that School 1 is a high poverty school, the supplemental funding they receive has not proven enough to close the achievement gap that exists. When it comes to achievement, School 1 displays substantially lower scores on all standardized tests (School Accountability Report Card, 2021). The achievement scores used for this research are to test the students ability to meet the state standards in math and english language arts. Below is a cart displaying the students achievement scores recorded in the School Accountability Report Card (SARC) from 2021.

**Table 2- Achievement Scores of the Schools**

	School 1	School 2
California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress Math	44.62	52.33
California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress English Language Arts	58.54	69.99
iReady Reading	44.47	61.24
iReady Math	39.31	52.75

*Achievement scores from School Accountability Report Card, 2021*

The newest data available is from 2019 because students have been unable to take these exams since 2019, all scores are from before the pandemic meaning that the scores are unaffected by the pandemic. On the California Assessment, School 2 had a 10 point advantage over School 1. For the iReady exams, School 2 students scored at least nearly 20 percent higher than the student scores from School 1 (School Accountability Report Card, 2021). These scores are significant because the students from the higher income school are able to produce higher scores while the students from the lower income schools produce significantly lower scores on state standards. After the iReady scores, School 1 received a Teacher on Special Assignment to help the school increase their scores (Inland Empire School District, 2022). It is unclear whether the teacher was able to improve the scores, but the gap between these schools is significant, and

if not much is done to intervene and advocate for the students from School 1 the achievement gap will only continue to widen.

After looking through district funding documents for both schools, it would seem like School 1 is receiving more funding based on all of their supplemental aid they receive from various different sources. However, despite the supplemental funding that School 1 receives, the gaps between the schools expenditures per pupil tell a completely different story. The chart below compares the amount of money that the district is investing per student at each of the schools compared to the goal created by the district.

**Table 3- Per Pupil Expenditures**

	District LCFF Goal	School 1	School 2
Current per pupil expenditures	9631	8040.56	13474.13
After 2 years (future estimate)	19262	16081.12	26984.26
After 7 years (future estimate)	67417	56283.92	94318.91
After 10 years (future estimate)	96310	80405.60	134741.30

*Per pupil expenditure information from School Accountability Report Card, 2022*

This \$5000 difference between School 1 and School 2 shows that although School 1 may be receiving supplemental funding, it will still not be enough to match the funding the higher income, white dominated school is receiving. For the 2020-2021 school year, the district's goal was to spend \$9,631 per student (Edsource, 2022). School 2 was already \$4,000 above that number while School 1 is still about \$1,500 below that number. Just \$1,500 would be able to

provide a substantial improvement for the students at School 1. Based on these per pupil expenditures, it is hard to believe that School 1 receives any supplemental funding. School Accountability Report Cards were created with the hope of providing accountability for schools and for the public to ensure that money is being spent on the schools that need it the most (School Accountability Report Card, 2021) . However, it is hard to justify a \$5,000 per pupil expenditure gap between a low income school and a high income school. Table 3, above, compares the amount of money that the district is investing per student at each of the schools compared to the goal created by the district. Overtime, the gap would result in tens of thousands of dollars. Assuming that children are attending the school for all 7 years (Kindergarten through 6th grade), a student that attends the higher income school would have nearly \$40,000 more dollars invested into their education compared to the student at the lower income school. Even if School 1 met the district LCAP goal, School 2 would still have almost a \$30,000 advantage over the students that attend School. The district sends a very clear message about which students, which demographics and which social classes are worth investing their money into.

### **Recommendations**

There are two solutions that the district needs to simultaneously work on: desegregation and funding equity.

#### **Desegregation**

The United States has worked towards desegregation for decades. Unfortunately, most of the attempts at both local and federal levels did not last long due to lack of support.

Desegregation, if properly implemented, can help equalize educational opportunities and prepare young Americans for the diverse society in which they will live (Orfield & Frankenburg, 2014).

The United States has seen a large jump in Latinx student enrollment, Orfield and Frankenburg



report a 495% increase in Latinx population over the last 40 years (pg. 720, 2014). The district we explored reported that they have a 54% Latinx student population and a 22% White student population (California Department of Education, 2022). Since they are a majority Latinx district, by continuing to segregate and provide a lower quality education to their Latino student populations compared to the higher quality education they provide for their White student counterparts, the district as a whole will begin to see the achievement levels as an entire district decline. Although segregation is believed to no longer exist in education after the passage of *Brown v Board*, it is hard for a district to explain how School 1 has over a student population with over 70% Latinx population while School 2 has a little over 30% Latinx population. It is even harder for a district to explain the funding inequalities that resulted in the school with a large Latinx population receiving \$5,000 less in per pupil spending than a school with a much smaller Latinx population.

As a district, they urgently need to make more of an effort to provide equal educational opportunities to their non-White students. In Southern Schools, the Johnson Administration forced change by cutting off funds and suing districts after the 1964 Civil Rights Act became law and within a few years the schools became the most integrated in the nation, and continues to be the least segregated schools in the nation (Orfield & Frankenburg, pg. 722, 2014). Although cutting funding and rolling out lawsuits seems like an aggressive step for lawmakers to take, the current plans that exist today are not moving at a fast enough rate. The districts do not see desegregation as a priority, and as a result minority students are shoved into lower quality schools and then blamed for their lower levels of achievement.

## **Funding Equity**

Striving for funding equality is not enough. Darling-Hammond (2013) explains that more money is needed in the lower income schools to achieve equivalent outcomes. By allowing more funding and resources for lower income schools, it can make up for the societal and economic conditions that potentially stand in the way of their academic achievement. More funding and resources has the potential to become the ladder they need to overcome these inequalities in order to close the achievement deficits and eventually allow them to achieve social mobility. The current funding implicitly suggests that investing money into lower income Latinx students would be wasted on these students.

The racial bias that we thought was abolished with *Brown v. Board* still very much exists and it continues to contribute to the education debt. Even if School 1 had enough funding to spend \$13,000 per pupil, some of that would still need to be allocated towards their After School Program, their Dual Education Program, and their Title 1 status. In order to provide equal educational opportunities for these schools, School 1 should be receiving more funding than School 2. Although that does not sound equal, School 1 needs the additional funding to provide qualified teachers, more resources, and additional support to help raise their achievement levels. It would not be an equal funding formula, but this formula would be based on the needs of the students rather than the races of the students. The students that attend School 2 come from middle class families. These students are more likely to have more resources available at home and more support from their parents. School 1, on the other hand, has a larger population of socioeconomically disadvantaged students and a larger population of English Learners. The students from School 1 are less likely to have more resources available to them at home and are less likely to receive support from their parents. In order to better serve the students and the

communities they come from, these schools would need to provide better resources based on the needs of their students.

### **Future Research**

We encountered one main limitation during the research: we knew how much money the schools were receiving and how much they were spending per pupil, but we did not know what exactly the money was being spent on. If I were able to dive deeper into this research, I would want to interview teachers and administration at both of the schools to better understand the conditions of each school and understand how their money is being spent. Their point of view would paint a better picture of the conditions of each of the schools. I would also want to interview district administration in order to better understand funding and how funding decisions are made. It is hard to look at the numbers and justify the funding inequalities, but it would be interesting to see what the district administration would have to say when confronted with the numbers. However, the education system is not effective if they make excuses for funding inequalities. By diving deeper into the funding inequalities that exist in this district, the hope would be to create more realistic equitable funding solutions that the district could then adopt. I would also hope that researchers would begin to replicate similar research with their own local school districts in order to find solutions that are specific to their own communities.

### **Conclusion**

The United States of America prides itself on being the ‘land of opportunity’, claiming that a person's success does not depend on their background. The belief is that with hard work anyone can succeed and obtain wealth and power, but that is not the reality. There are systems of inequalities that exist in order to reserve success, wealth and power for certain groups of people. Most of the time, these certain groups do not include people of Color. Unfortunately, the

education system is one of the many systems of inequality that serve to reserve success, wealth and power for certain groups. The education system plays a substantial role in dictating the economic trajectory of their students' lives. By continuing to have a system that segregates students based on their income levels, they are predicting the future income levels of their students. It is hard to believe that it is an accident that economic segregation also results in racial segregation and this intentional segregation creates unequal educational conditions and opportunities for the students. Funding inequalities are often looked at between districts, but rarely within the districts. Based on my personal experience growing up at each of the schools, I knew on the surface level that the conditions at the schools were unequal. I did not expect to find such a large deficit between their per pupil expenditures, and I was saddened to obtain a better understanding as to why these two schools seemed very different.

The sad reality about funding for education is that funding inequalities will not be fixed overnight. They will not be fixed during one fiscal year, but I assumed that over the last 60 years since the passage of *Brown v Board*, the funding inequalities and education debts that exist would not be as substantial. Education has a long way to go to reach equality, but it is important to look closely at the funding of the schools, even funding within the same district, and point out the stark inequalities that exist. The first step towards inequality is pointing out that there is an issue to begin with. I hope that within the next decade, the district in this study will be able to provide a more equitable education for their students.

## REFERENCES

- ACLU Southern California. (2022). *Williams v. State of California*.  
<https://www.aclusocal.org/en/cases/williams-v-state-california>
- ArcGIS. (2022). *ArcGIS*. <https://www.arcgis.com/index.html>
- California Department of Education. (2022). *District Profile: (CA Dept of Education)*  
<https://www.cde.ca.gov/sdprofile/details.aspx?cds=33670330000000>
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2013). Inequality and school resources: What it will take to close the opportunity gap. In Carter L. P., & Welner, G. K. (Eds.), *Closing the opportunity gap: What America must do to give every child an even chance* (pp. 77-97). Oxford University Press
- EdSource. (2016). *Welcome to the Local Control Funding Formula Guide*.  
<https://edsources.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/lcff-guide-print-version.pdf>
- Edsource. (2022). *Inland Empire School District School Finance | EdSource*.  
<https://edsources.org/local-control-funding-formula-database/InlandEmpireSchoolDistrict.html>
- Fischel, W. A. (1996). How serrano caused proposition 13. *Journal of Law & Politics*, 12(4), 607-636.
- Fontana, L. (2002). California students demand basic education rights. *Public Interest Law Reporter*, 7(1), 29.
- Goldstein, S. R. (1972). Interdistrict inequalities in school financing: Critical analysis of Serrano v. Priest and its progeny *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, 120(3), 504-544.

Inland Empire School District. (2022). *Measure 25*.

[https://www.InlandEmpireSchoolDistrict.k12.ca.us/departments/business\\_services/measure25](https://www.InlandEmpireSchoolDistrict.k12.ca.us/departments/business_services/measure25)

Inland Empire School District. (2022). *Local Control Accountability Plan*.

[https://p18cdn4static.sharpschool.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server\\_211876/File/Our%20Departments/Educational%20Services/LCAP/2021\\_Local\\_Control\\_and\\_Accountability\\_Plan\\_InlandEmpireSchoolDistrict\\_20210719.pdf](https://p18cdn4static.sharpschool.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server_211876/File/Our%20Departments/Educational%20Services/LCAP/2021_Local_Control_and_Accountability_Plan_InlandEmpireSchoolDistrict_20210719.pdf).

Inland Empire School District. (2022). *Title I Schools*.

[https://www.InlandEmpireSchoolDistrict.k12.ca.us/departments/educational\\_services/funding\\_program\\_accountability/title\\_i\\_schools](https://www.InlandEmpireSchoolDistrict.k12.ca.us/departments/educational_services/funding_program_accountability/title_i_schools).

Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in U.S. schools. *Educational Researcher*, 35(7), 3-12.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2013). Lack of achievement of loss or opportunity? In Carter L. P., & Welner, G. K. (Eds.), *Closing the opportunity gap: What America must do to give every child an even chance* (pp. 11-22). Oxford University Press.

Moses, S. M., & Rogers, J. (2013) Enhancing a nation's democracy through equitable schools. In Carter L. P., & Welner, G. K. (Eds.), *Closing the opportunity gap: What America must do to give every child an even chance* (pp. 207-216). Oxford University Press

National Center for Education Statistics. (2019). *Public school students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch*. <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=898>

Necochea, J., & Cline, Z. (1996). A case study analysis of within district school funding inequities. *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 29(2), 69-77.

- Noguera, P. A. (2011). A broader and bolder approach uses education to break the cycle of poverty. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 93(3), 8–14. <https://doi.org/10.1177/003172171109300303>
- Oakes, J., & Lipton, M. (2004). Schools that shock the conscience: Williams v. California and the struggle for education on equal terms fifty years after brown. *Berkeley La Raza Law Journal*, 15(1), 25-50.
- Orfield, G. (2013) Housing segregation produces unequal schools. In Carter L. P., & Welner, G. K. (Eds.), *Closing the opportunity gap: What America must do to give every child an even chance* (pp. 40-60). Oxford University Press.
- Orfield, G., & Frankenberg, E. (2014). Increasingly Segregated and Unequal Schools as Courts Reverse Policy. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 50(5), 718–734.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X14548942>
- School Accountability Report Card. (2021). *School 1: 2021 School Accountability Report Card*.  
[https://p18cdn4static.sharpschool.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server\\_211876/File/Our%20Departments/Educational%20Services/SARC/School1\\_SARC\\_ENG.pdf](https://p18cdn4static.sharpschool.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server_211876/File/Our%20Departments/Educational%20Services/SARC/School1_SARC_ENG.pdf).
- School Accountability Report Card. (2021). *School 2: 2021 School Accountability Report Card*.  
[https://p18cdn4static.sharpschool.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server\\_211876/File/Our%20Departments/Educational%20Services/SARC/School2\\_SARC\\_ENG.pdf](https://p18cdn4static.sharpschool.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server_211876/File/Our%20Departments/Educational%20Services/SARC/School2_SARC_ENG.pdf).