



BUILDING LADDERS OF OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE GREAT LAKES STATES, BRIEF 2

Strategies for Supporting Early Reading Proficiency to Close Achievement Gaps

Megan Gallagher and Matthew M. Chingos

November 2017

Investments in strategies that unlock the potential of children of color and low-income children growing up in the Great Lakes states will increase workforce capacity and boost economic prosperity. This brief recommends evidence-based strategies that state and local leaders can pursue to ensure children of color and low-income children are reading by third grade. Although reading in third grade alone will not ensure success, research shows that children who are not reading proficiently by third grade are four times more likely than proficient readers to drop out of high school (Hernandez 2012). Reading skills are foundational for middle and high school success and can close achievement gaps in K-12 education and enhance opportunities for children of color and low-income children.

Children enter kindergarten with experiences and knowledge from their family, child care, and prekindergarten environments. Because these experiences vary by race and family income, many children enter school lagging behind their peers. Evidence suggests that children from low-income families are often exposed to millions fewer words, placing them on average at a disadvantage for building vocabulary and comprehension (Hart and Risley 2003). Ensuring that all children, regardless of their early experiences, can read by the time they are in third grade positions them to absorb content in later elementary grades and establish a strong foundation for secondary school. Recent research has shown that the technical skills of reading are important, but they are not enough. Young children must be taught reading for comprehension, which pairs instruction on decoding letters and words with instruction on how to derive meaning from the content. Mastery of these skills allows students to learn independently and access new content with ease, establishing a foundation for learning through

elementary and secondary school. Reading can unlock the potential of children in the lower elementary grades to learn content in math, science, social studies, and other subjects.

In the United States, children of color lag behind their white peers. The 2009 National Assessment for Education Progress (NAEP) found that black and Hispanic students' scores were three-quarters of a standard deviation below scores of white students, equal to a difference of four years of learning (Reardon 2011). Although the racial achievement gap has narrowed, it persists. Also concerning is the growing achievement gap between high- and low-income students. In 2001, the achievement gap between high- and low-income families was greater than it was 25 years earlier (Reardon 2011).

BOX 1

About This Policy Brief Series

This brief is part of a series recommending policies that will build ladders of opportunity and economic mobility for young people in the six state Great Lakes region—Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

The series of policy briefs follows a [framing paper](#) that detailed the challenges and opportunities facing the Great Lakes region (Pendall et al. 2017). During the first decade of the 2000s, manufacturing employment and incomes fell substantially, government revenues declined, and young people moved away from the region. Manufacturing has begun to rebound, but communities throughout the region are still dealing with the direct and ripple effects of this unprecedented blow to their economic base. Despite these severe challenges, ample evidence suggests the Great Lakes region has significant assets and a strong foundation that can sustain future economic and population growth and higher levels of prosperity. Ensuring the future productivity, stability, and prosperity of the region, though, requires policies and investments that bolster the people currently living in the Great Lakes states, especially young people.

The series includes five policy briefs with strategies for the following:

- supporting access to high-quality child development and preschool programs ([Katz 2017](#))
- eliminating gaps in K–12 education so all can read by third grade and graduate from high school ready for college or career (this brief)
- promoting successful transitions to adulthood, higher education, and the workforce ([Spaulding 2017](#))
- reducing criminal and juvenile justice involvement for young people ([Jannetta and Okeke 2017](#))
- supporting basic needs to promote opportunity and economic mobility for young people ([Hahn 2017](#))

The in-depth policy analyses and recommendations in these briefs shed light on what needs to be done and what decisionmakers can do to invest in young people and ensure broad-based prosperity and a high quality of life in the Great Lakes region for coming generations.

In this brief, using standardized tests of fourth grade reading achievement, we compare academic achievement across states and demographic groups. We provide a brief overview of the federal, state,

and local role in education and propose evidence-based strategies to boost achievement among low-income children and children of color. Our recommendations focus on reading achievement gaps between children in different racial and economic groups from kindergarten to third grade and strategies that stakeholders can pursue at the state and local level to close these gaps. Our list of strategies is not exhaustive, and its potential impact is not limited to kindergarten through third grade.

How Great Lakes States Stack Up on Achievement and Achievement Gaps

Growing racial diversity and income inequality demand that educators double down on efforts to eliminate racial and income achievement gaps. Failure to target and close these gaps will result in more lost potential and more inequality of opportunity and outcomes.

Fourth grade NAEP reading scores for white and Asian students are higher than reading scores for Hispanic and black students (table 1), and gaps between white and black students are widest in Minnesota and Wisconsin. NAEP data also convey the gap between reading scores for students from low- and high-income families, as measured by eligibility for subsidized meals at school. Gaps in average reading by race or ethnicity and family income are narrowest in Indiana.

TABLE 1

Average NAEP Scale Scores for Fourth Grade Reading by Race or Ethnicity and Income, 2015

	Race or Ethnicity				Family Income	
	White	Hispanic	Black	Asian	Low	High
Illinois	234	212	205	249	208	239
Indiana	232	218	214	n/a	217	238
Michigan	223	205	196	237	204	228
Minnesota	233	206	202	225	205	236
Ohio	231	216	208	n/a	212	238
Wisconsin	232	212	198	219	207	236
National	232	212	208	242	209	236

Source: US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2015 Reading Assessment.

Notes: Includes public and private schools. "Race or Ethnicity" is student-reported. Eligibility for the National School Lunch Program is a proxy for low income. "n/a" is either not applicable or the reporting standards were not met.

States enact standards to set expectations for what students should learn in each grade, administer standardized tests to assess student learning in relation to those standards, and determine the level of test performance that signifies proficiency. Great Lakes states' definitions of proficiency vary when examined and compared using NAEP equivalents. The National Center for Education Statistics has mapped the state math and reading proficiency cutoffs to NAEP scores to allow for comparisons across states that use different standardized tests. The most recent analysis, conducted in 2013, reveals wide variation in what constitutes proficient performance in math and reading for fourth graders and eighth

graders. This variation is present in the six Great Lakes states (table 2). The 72-point difference between Ohio and Wisconsin is almost as large as the 76-point difference between the two states in the US with the most divergent expectations for proficiency (NCES 2013).

TABLE 2

NAEP-Equivalent Score That Represents Proficiency on State Standard for the State Reading Proficiency Standards in Fourth Grade, 2013

	NAEP equivalent of state reading standard
Illinois	215
Indiana	195
Michigan	205
Minnesota	227
Ohio	168
Wisconsin	240

Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), *Mapping State Proficiency Standards onto NAEP Scales: Results from the 2013 NAEP Reading and Mathematics Assessments* (Washington, DC: US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, NCES, 2015).

Note: NAEP = National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Compared with NAEP equivalents of state proficiency, average NAEP scores for low-income students and students of color fall below state proficiency benchmarks in most Great Lakes states. But state proficiency cutoffs range widely, resulting in all subgroups in Ohio performing above the Ohio state benchmark and all subgroups in Wisconsin performing below the Wisconsin state benchmark.

What the Great Lakes States Can Do to Increase Achievement and Eliminate Gaps

With demographic change coming and under way and many reform efforts in the pipeline, state and local leaders can recruit and prepare teachers for diverse classrooms and make schools more welcoming and supportive for low-income students and students of color. There are steps states and localities can take to narrow and eliminate achievement gaps or amplify efforts where already started. State leaders are positioned to define and champion approaches such as those we propose here, but localities will need to bring them to fruition.

Prepare Teachers for Racially and Economically Diverse Classrooms

Ronald Ferguson's 2016 report on strategies for achieving better educational outcomes for boys and men of color emphasized the importance of the "person-environment fit," in which teachers and students are well prepared to meet each other's expectations in the classroom. Teacher training and professional development programs must ensure that teachers have the training and tools they need to

succeed, particularly in classrooms where students are not well prepared or where there is a mix of abilities. Teachers with strong classroom management skills will be able to command attention and encourage cooperation in orderly classrooms without exercising harsh or exclusionary discipline practices.

Increase the Share of Teachers Who Are Teachers of Color

The case for increasing the share of teachers of color is twofold: teachers of color can be important role models for all children, regardless of their background, and they can particularly benefit children of color with whom they share cultural background and experiences (Villegas, Strom, and Lucas 2012). An analysis of Tennessee’s Project STAR (Student-Teacher Achievement Ratio) data found that black and Hispanic students performed better in reading and math when they had a teacher of the same race (Dee 2004); and a new study by Lindsay and Hart (2017) finds that students are less likely to be removed from the classroom for discipline when they are the same race as their teacher. Longitudinal student data are the basis for a growing body of evidence that student-teacher race match matters for achievement and achievement-related outcomes (Egalite, Kisida, and Winters, n.d.; Gershenson et al. 2017).

Given the potential benefits of student-teacher racial match for students of color, we compare the proportions of students and teachers who are of color. Teachers of color are woefully underrepresented. In 2011–12, children of color made up more than 52 percent of the school-age population nationally, but teachers of color made up only 18 percent of the teaching force. The Center for American Progress reported this differential across states and ranked states according to the difference between their share of nonwhite students and their share of nonwhite teachers (Boser 2014). Table 3 presents the differential for the Great Lakes states. Illinois suffers from the largest differential, and Indiana and Ohio had the smallest.

TABLE 3
Difference between Proportion of Nonwhite Students and Proportion Nonwhite Teachers, 2011–12

	IL	IN	MI	MN	OH	WI	National
Difference	32	20	22	21	18	22	30

Source: Teacher Diversity Index reported in Ulrich Boser, “Teacher Diversity Revisited: A New State-by-State Analysis” (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, 2014).

Bolster Funding Formulas to Support Learning

Closing the achievement gap requires examining school finance and spending and reconfiguring budgets to meet stated education goals. Research finds that increased funding is associated with improved student outcomes. Jackson, Johnson, and Persico (2016) found that increasing per pupil spending results in more years of education, higher wages, and lower rates of adult poverty. Urban Institute research examines school funding in relation to student poverty and identifies progressive and

regressive states.¹ Among Great Lakes states, Illinois stands out for spending less on poor students than nonpoor students, and Ohio stands out for spending more on poor students (table 4).

TABLE 4

Variation in Cost-Adjusted Per Pupil Funding for Poor and Nonpoor Students, 2014

	Poor	Nonpoor	Difference
Illinois	\$14,359	\$14,820	-\$461
Indiana	\$12,964	\$12,433	\$521
Michigan	\$13,105	\$12,525	\$581
Minnesota	\$14,547	\$13,635	\$912
Ohio	\$16,403	\$14,799	\$1,605
Wisconsin	\$13,483	\$13,027	\$457

Source: Matthew Chingos and Kristin Blagg, “School Funding: Do Poor Kids Get Their Fair Share?” Urban Institute, accessed September 27, 2017, <http://apps.urban.org/features/school-funding-do-poor-kids-get-fair-share/>.

Michigan’s Proposal A eliminated local property taxes to fund schools and replaced them with state revenues, redistributing resources from more affluent to less affluent communities. A 2016 study found that the proposal substantially increased spending and improved student outcomes. Each \$1,000 increase in spending for grades 4 through 7 resulted in a 3 percentage point increase in the likelihood the student would attend postsecondary school (Hyman 2016).

Close the Reading Achievement Gap as Early as Possible

For schools to eliminate opportunity and achievement gaps, they must tackle the gaps that exist when students enter kindergarten. Reading is foundational for learning, opening doors to new content and understanding. Building these skills between kindergarten and third grade will increase their abilities to absorb information and succeed academically. Well-established, evidence-based strategies should be integrated into state curricula to improve reading and reading comprehension. For English language learners, literacy and content should be combined in lesson planning to meet reading and content-based goals. The Institute for Education Studies’ What Works Clearinghouse did extensive research on reading comprehension and assembled a guide for teaching English learners that includes strategies recommended based on evidence that demonstrates their efficacy.²

Education Policy Set at the State and Local Level

Most funding and policy levers for education are at the state and local level. During the 2012–13 school year, only 8 percent of expenditures for primary and secondary education came from federal sources.³ Rather than setting the education standards for the country, the federal government is concerned with supplementing state and local efforts, particularly for vulnerable students. The US Department of Education also monitors and addresses inequities for protected groups through its Office of Civil Rights and runs programs to protect and support economically disadvantaged students, students with

disabilities, students in foster care, and homeless students. The federal government also drives innovation and access to information about evidence-based education policies and practices.

States set key policies on standards for what students should know, which curricula should be used to meet those standards, accountability frameworks, human capital policies, and school choice policies. States also make decisions about sources and levels of funding for education. The 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, also known as the No Child Left Behind Act, required states to develop their own assessments and standards to measure student achievement. The goal was for states to clarify expectations for specific subjects and make schools accountable for teaching them. Many states have adopted some or all of the Common Core State Standards, which were developed by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers, with input from administrators, researchers, teachers, and parents. But variation across states remains. The 2015 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, also known as the Every Student Succeeds Act, requires states to submit their plans to the US Department of Education in 2017.

At the local level, school boards (and sometimes mayors) are responsible for implementing policies, staffing schools, and collecting additional funds to supplement state spending. Working at the state and local level, nonprofits and philanthropists can make important contributions to education policy and practice.

Promising Models in the Great Lakes Region

Across the Great Lakes states, we see promising models for each of the recommended strategies. Several Great Lakes states are home to programs that **prepare teachers for diverse classrooms**. The Illinois State Board of Education supports the Illinois Resource Center, which provides conferences, workshops, and technical assistance for teachers and parents of English language learners and culturally diverse students. Wisconsin's Department of Public Instruction partners with the Cooperative Educational Service Agency to provide similar supports for culturally responsive practices. Both efforts partnered high-level state offices with local entities to improve outreach.

Federal funding from the US Department of Education Teacher Quality Partnership is fueling innovation in Illinois, which received \$10 million over five years to create model teacher preparation programs. The grant supports the STEP-UP Program through Illinois State University's URBAN CENTER (Using Research-Based Actions to Network Cities Engaged in New Teacher Education Reform).⁴ STEP-UP is an intensive, four-week residency program to enhance new teachers' multicultural competencies and prepare them to work in diverse classrooms. A recent study of the 2016 cohort of 21 STEP-UP fellows found improvements in beliefs and motivations for teaching in urban schools but has not estimated impacts on student achievement (CTEP 2016).

Birmingham, Michigan, in the Detroit metropolitan area, is a forward-looking district in teacher preparation for diverse classrooms. Birmingham Public Schools has initiated a four-year plan to

institutionalize culturally responsive teaching by identifying and training culturally responsive training liaisons in all schools to train and support staff (BPS, n.d.).

Several Great Lakes states have initiated **minority teacher recruitment initiatives**. The Illinois General Assembly appropriates funding each year to offer scholarships to minority teachers who work in schools with more than 30 percent minority student populations.⁵ In Indiana, black and Hispanic students in teaching programs are eligible for tuition scholarships if they plan to teach in Indiana public schools for three years and stipends to support teaching and school administration internships through Indiana's Commission for Higher Education.⁶ Minnesota's Coalition to Increase Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers raises funds for education, legislative advocacy, and peer learning networks to increase teacher diversity. Its 2016 Summer Conference for Aspiring and Current Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers was supported by the Bush Foundation.

The Great Lakes states are **investing in K-3 learning** by providing clear expectations and financial incentives for schools. Michigan governor Rick Snyder signed legislation in 2016 to target improvements in third grade literacy.⁷ The bill includes provisions to support students, including early screenings and diagnostics to identify at-need students, individualized reading plans for students who are falling behind, and professional development for teachers on improving reading proficiency. In Chicago, Mayor Rahm Emanuel created the Mayoral Task Force on Literacy in 2015 to close Chicago's reading achievement gap. Although this task force focuses on literacy among students with disabilities, it has broad implications for curriculum and instruction for children from prekindergarten through third grade across the city. Task force recommendations include strengthening literacy instruction for K-3 students and improving ways to identify and serve students who struggle with reading. Funding was provided by the Chicago Community Trust and a consortium of donors, including philanthropy and businesses that support people with disabilities.

Indiana's Literacy Early Intervention Grants are intended to target first and second grade students at risk of failing to read by third grade. In fiscal year 2016-17, schools that opted in received a minimum of \$20 a student.⁸ The funds can be used for training, media center resources, reading intervention programs, or diagnostic tools to support performance measurement.

Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio have third grade reading legislation that requires students to be retained if they are not proficient by the end of third grade.⁹ Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee requires schools to identify and support students who are not on track, including use of diagnostic tests, retention policies, and teacher qualifications for retained students.¹⁰ Funding for the guarantee is included in the per pupil funding formula for students in kindergarten through third grade (OBSF, n.d.). The long-term impacts of such reading retention policies on student achievement and attainment should be carefully evaluated in these states.

Next Steps for States, Localities, Schools, and Philanthropy in the Great Lakes Region

In this brief, we highlight policies and programs with potential to close racial and income achievement gaps in reading. We focus on strategies that prepare teachers for increasingly diverse classrooms, recruit and retain teachers of color, enhance funding for poor students, and boost reading and reading comprehension. We demonstrate that efforts are already under way in Great Lakes states to close achievement gaps at various levels of government and with various levels of public and private support. They vary in goals, target populations, and intensity. Some are supported by time-limited grants or are subject to annual appropriations, and others rely on district or school leaders to opt in or match state funding.

Although each strategy is motivated by evidence on the importance of early literacy or evaluations of programs that improve student achievement, high-quality evidence on the effectiveness (and cost-effectiveness) of many programs is not available. It is critical that investments be accompanied by careful attention to outcomes and rigorous evaluation efforts so that successful programs and policies can be expanded and unsuccessful ones can be refined or replaced.

The list of strategies we highlight is not exhaustive, and many others could boost reading achievement. Other areas to consider include school choice policies, teacher and school accountability policies, teacher pension and salary policies, and state curriculum standards. Fertile researcher-practitioner partnerships can also provide educators additional tools and resources for identifying gaps and evidence-based practices designed to close them. State and local efforts to foster and support collaborations between the education, health, and housing sectors also create opportunities to leverage touch points with children and parents that can boost literacy.

Education partners should build the capacity of states and localities to close reading achievement gaps by helping them identify, implement, and evaluate evidence-based solutions. Investments in strategies that close achievement gaps and unlock the potential of all children will pay dividends not only for these children's lives but for the economic prosperity of the Great Lakes region.

Notes

1. Matt Chingos and Kristin Blagg, "School Funding: Do Poor Kids Get Their Fair Share?" Urban Institute, accessed September 27, 2017, <http://apps.urban.org/features/school-funding-do-poor-kids-get-fair-share/>.
2. "Welcome to the What Works Clearinghouse," US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, What Works Clearinghouse, accessed September 27, 2017, <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>.
3. "The Federal Role in Education," US Department of Education, last updated May 25, 2017, <https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/fed/role.html>.
4. "STEP-UP," Illinois State University, National Center for Urban Education, accessed September 27, 2017, <https://ncue.illinoisstate.edu/programs/stepup/>.

5. "Minority Teachers of Illinois (MTI) Scholarship Program," Illinois Student Assistance Commission, last updated September 26, 2017, <http://www.isac.org/isac-gift-assistance-programs/minority-teachers-of-illinois-scholarship/>.
6. "State Financial Aid-by Program," Indiana Commission for Higher Education, accessed September 27, 2017, <https://www.in.gov/che/4498.htm>.
7. Office of Governor Rick Snyder, "Gov. Rick Snyder Signs Legislation Prioritizing Third Grade Reading Proficiency in Michigan," news release, October 6, 2016, http://www.michigan.gov/snyder/0,4668,7-277-57577_57657-395040--,00.html.
8. "Indiana Literacy Early Intervention Grant," Indiana Department of Education, last updated September 26, 2017, <https://www.doe.in.gov/earlylearning/indiana-literacy-early-intervention-grant>.
9. "Third-Grade Reading Legislation," National Conference of State Legislatures, July 31, 2017, <http://www.ncsl.org/research/education/third-grade-reading-legislation.aspx>.
10. "Third Grade Reading Guarantee," Ohio Department of Education, last updated September 18, 2017, <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/Literacy/Third-Grade-Reading-Guarantee>.

References

- Boser, Ulrich. 2014. "Teacher Diversity Revisited: A New State-by-State Analysis." Washington, DC: Center for American Progress.
- BPS (Birmingham Public Schools). n.d. "Culturally Responsive Teaching: A BPS Professional Learning Plan." Beverly Hills, MI: BPS.
- CTEP (Chicago Teacher Education Pipeline). 2016. "Summer Teacher Education Partnership for Urban Preparation (STEP-UP) Evaluative Report." Normal: Illinois State University, College of Education, CTEP.
- Dee, Thomas S. 2004. "Teachers, Race, and Student Achievement in a Randomized Experiment." *Review of Economics and Statistics* 86 (1): 195–210.
- Egalite, Anna J., Brian Kisida, and Marcus A. Winters. n.d. *Representation in the Classroom: The Effect of Own-Race/Ethnicity Teacher Assignment on Student Achievement*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, Program on Education Policy and Governance.
- Ferguson, Ronald F. 2016. *Aiming Higher Together: Strategizing Better Educational Outcomes for Boys and Young Men of Color*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
- Gershenson, Seth, Cassandra M. D. Hart, Constance A. Lindsay, and Nicholas W. Papageorge. 2017. *The Long-Run Impacts of Same-Race Teachers*. Bonn, Germany: IZA Institute of Labor Economics.
- Hahn, Heather. 2017. "Strategies for Supporting Basic Needs to Promote Opportunity and Economic Mobility." Building Ladders of Opportunity for Young People in the Great Lakes States, brief 5. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
- Hart, Betty, and Todd R. Risley. 2003. "The Early Catastrophe: The 30 Million Word Gap." *American Educator* 27 (1): 4–9.
- Hernandez, Donald J. 2012. "Double Jeopardy: How Third Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation." Baltimore: Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- Hyman, Joshua. 2016. *Does Money Matter in the Long Run? Effects of School Spending on Educational Attainment*. Lansing: Michigan Department of Education.
- Jackson, C. Kirabo, Rucker C. Johnson, and Claudia Persico. 2016. "The Effects of School Spending on Educational and Economic Outcomes: Evidence from School Finance Reforms." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 131 (1): 157–218.

- Jannetta, Jesse, and Cameron Okeke. 2017. “[Strategies for Reducing Criminal and Juvenile Justice Involvement.](#)” Building Ladders of Opportunity for Young People in the Great Lakes States, brief 4. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
- Katz, Michael. 2017. “[Strategies for Supporting Access to High-Quality Early Education Programs.](#)” Building Ladders of Opportunity for Young People in the Great Lakes States, brief 1. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
- Lindsay, Constance A., and Cassandra M. D. Hart. 2017. “[Teacher Race and School Discipline.](#)” *Education Next* 17 (1): 72–78.
- NCES (National Center for Education Statistics). 2013. *Mapping State Proficiency Standards onto NAEP Scales: Results from the 2013 NAEP Reading and Mathematics Assessments*. Washington, DC: US Department of Education, Institute for Education Sciences, NCES.
- OBSF (Office of Budget and School Funding). n.d. “[Ohio FY 17 School Finance Payment Report \(SFPR\): Line-by-Line Explanation.](#)” Columbus: Ohio Department of Education, Office of Budget and School Funding.
- Reardon, Sean F. 2011. “The Widening Academic Achievement Gap between the Rich and the Poor: New Evidence and Possible Explanations.” In *Whither Opportunity: Rising Inequality, Schools, and Children’s Life Chances*, edited by Greg J. Duncan and Richard J. Murnane, 91–116. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Spaulding, Shayne. 2017. “[Strategies for Promoting Successful Transitions to Adulthood, Higher Education, and the Workforce.](#)” Building Ladders of Opportunity for Young People in the Great Lakes States, brief 3. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
- Villegas, Ana Maria, Kathryn Strom, and Tamara Lucas. 2012. “[Closing the Racial/Ethnic Gap between Students of Color and Their Teachers: An Elusive Goal.](#)” *Equity and Excellence in Education* 45 (2): 283–301.

About the Authors



Megan Gallagher is a senior research associate in the Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center at the Urban Institute. Her research focuses on efforts to improve housing and educational opportunities for children in low-income families. She studies how housing and neighborhood initiatives affect schools and how schools and education policies affect neighborhoods. Her current projects include a pilot demonstration to improve low-income parents’ information about their children’s educational opportunities and an analysis of school- and neighborhood-level predictors of school closures. Gallagher holds a BA in sociology and social welfare from the University of Wisconsin–Madison and an MA in public policy from Georgetown University.



Matthew M. Chingos is director of the Urban Institute’s Education Policy Program, which undertakes policy-relevant research on issues from prekindergarten through postsecondary education. He is an executive editor of *Education Next* and coauthor of *Game of Loans: The Rhetoric and Reality of Student Debt* and *Crossing the Finish Line: Completing College at America’s Public Universities*. Chingos received a BA in government and economics and a PhD in government from Harvard University.

Acknowledgments

This brief was funded by the Joyce Foundation. We are grateful to them and to all our funders, who make it possible for Urban to advance its mission.

The views expressed are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the Urban Institute, its trustees, or its funders. Funders do not determine research findings or the insights and recommendations of Urban experts. Further information on the Urban Institute’s funding principles is available at www.urban.org/support.

We thank Constance Lindsay, Aaron Sojourner, Erika Poethig, Rolf Pendall, and Beth Swanson for their comments on earlier versions of this brief. We are also grateful to Heather Berg, Lily Posey, Yuju Park, and Ruth Gourevitch for their research assistance.



2100 M Street NW
Washington, DC 20037
www.urban.org

ABOUT THE URBAN INSTITUTE

The nonprofit Urban Institute is dedicated to elevating the debate on social and economic policy. For nearly five decades, Urban scholars have conducted research and offered evidence-based solutions that improve lives and strengthen communities across a rapidly urbanizing world. Their objective research helps expand opportunities for all, reduce hardship among the most vulnerable, and strengthen the effectiveness of the public sector.

Copyright © November 2017. Urban Institute. Permission is granted for reproduction of this file, with attribution to the Urban Institute.