A Regional Approach to School Diversity:

The Possibility, Feasibility, and Desirability

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the possibility, feasibility, and desirability of a regional middle school in the metro Richmond area with an emphasis on racial and economic diversity. The following research questions were investigated: (1) What are the national trends in and solutions to address issues of racial and economic isolation; (2) What federal, state, and/or local legislation impacts the creation of a regional middle school; (3) What are the potential funding sources for creating a regional middle school; and (4) Is there regional support to create a regional middle school. Four case studies are presented which help to characterize commonly used voluntary school integration plans or student assignment methods employed by school districts to avoid racial and socioeconomic isolation in order to promote diversity. A survey was disseminated to 824 constituents of three regional advocacy groups. Two hundred and fifty people responded (30.5% response rate) and the data was analyzed according to the following themes: (1) perceptions of school diversity; (2) perceptions of regional support; (3) preferences for school type and program focus; and (4) perceived obstacles to regional cooperation. The data revealed an overwhelming support for a regional middle school with a focus on STEM and an emphasis on diversity. In addition, the research clearly indicates the creation of a regional middle school with an emphasis on diversity can positively impact student achievement and serve as a model for best practices in the development of intercultural competency among students, teachers, and administrators. Implications of the study suggest that the creation of a single school may have a limited impact on the region, but it is an important first step which could lead to the development of a replicable model to scale up across the region.

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Background and Context

On June 3, 2013, the Richmond School Board voted unanimously (9-0) to move forward with plans for a massive overhaul of attendance zones, requiring more than 2,000 Richmond elementary school students to be reassigned to new schools for the upcoming school year. Many in the community, including leaders of the Richmond NAACP and Crusade for Voters, viewed this decision as a step backward in an effort to promote school desegregation. Taking action, a local advocacy group, Richmond Coalition for Quality Education, is backing a lawsuit filed with the Richmond Circuit Court against the School Board. The lawsuit claims school rezoning changes were made without proper notice, and alleges the "decision was done in an arbitrary and capricious manner" (Patterson, 2013). The Board argued, however, that the attendance zone changes were part of a larger plan to consolidate schools, reduce overcrowding, and achieve cost savings.

Other local and regional advocates who are pushing for more school diversity weighed in on the matter as well. They also disagreed with the Board's rezoning decision—which did not publically consider the racial composition implications of rezoning—and suggested the rezoning changes undermined the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision to desegregate schools. Moreover, advocates argue, resegregation of schools does nothing to equip students for a global society. Dr. Siegel-Hawley, a professor at Virginia Commonwealth University and an expert on school racial patterns, warned the Board their rezoning changes threaten to reverse what little racial diversity progress that has been made (Lazarus, 2013).

Issues of racial segregation have long plagued the Richmond metro area. A myriad of historical events have made Richmond City the epicenter of poor Black neighborhoods in the

region, and they include: racially restricted post-WWII suburban growth; slum clearance and redevelopment projects; and discriminatory practices in real estate and banking which ultimately led to the proliferation of Black and mixed-raced neighborhoods (Shields, Bridges, Moeser, & Siegel-Hawley, 2013). As the city became predominantly Black and the immediate suburban counties became overwhelmingly White, so did the demographic composition of their respective schools.

In 1973, when the U.S. Supreme Court effectively ended the U.S. district court-ordered merger of Richmond City and the counties of Henrico and Chesterfield (*Bradley v. School Board of Richmond*), many viewed this as a missed opportunity to stem the tide on school segregation. The impact of that decision still reverberates 40 years later. Today, the student enrollment of Richmond Public Schools profiles a less than ten percent White population, while Henrico has achieved—and Chesterfield is quickly approaching—a majority-minority school division status, where more than 50% of the student body is non-White. By 2010, racial diversity experienced by the suburban school divisions were attributed to an influx of Black students, which accounted for over one third of the student enrollment; at the same time, more than one third of the Black students in the Richmond area attended intensely segregated schools (Siegel-Hawley, Ayscue, Kuscera, & Orfield, 2013).

Growing racial and socioeconomic resegregation in and among the school divisions in the region has become a major concern of late. Siegel-Hawley et al. (2013) contends that racially and economically isolated schools have short and long-term negative consequences that severely limit student success in school and beyond. Several factors are listed that tend to produce lower educational outcomes and opportunities including fewer qualified teachers, higher teacher turnover, inferior facilities, and higher dropout rates. This moment in time presents an important

juncture—a second opportunity of sorts—for leaders and advocates in the Richmond metro area to reverse the momentum of resegregation and to advance educational equality for the next generation of students.

It was only befitting that in March of 2013, on the 40th anniversary of the *Bradley* ruling, that a major conference on the meaning of race, class, and school boundaries in the metro area was held; this conference set the stage for a regional dialogue. Virginia Commonwealth University's School of Education and University of Richmond's School of Continuing Studies Graduate Education Program and Center for leadership co-hosted the "Looking Back, Moving Forward" conference which convened national and local researchers, educational practitioners, policymakers, advocates, community members, parents, and students to explore ways to advance educational equity and excellence in Richmond metro area schools. The primary goal of that conference, and ultimately this movement, is to generate regional solutions for advancing high quality, diverse, and carefully structured learning opportunities.

Research Questions

A capstone project team from Virginia Commonwealth University's doctoral education leadership program was formed, and tasked with determining the possibility, feasibility, and desirability of a regional solution to creating diverse learning environments. This was achieved by answering the following research questions:

(1) What are national trends and solutions to address issues of racial and economic isolation?

(2) What are the federal, state, and/or local legislative guidelines impacting the creation of a regional middle school?

(3) What are potential funding sources available to create a regional middle school?

(4) Is there regional support to create a regional middle school?

This study sought to answer these essential questions with a focus on the creation of a regional magnet middle school to be located in the metro Richmond area. This evaluative process began with a literature review of the issues surrounding racially and economically isolated schools. By corollary, a discussion of the benefits for schools that are racially and economically diverse follows. Next, a more detailed narrative traces how these issues have impacted the Richmond metro area historically to present day. Finally, a better understanding is gained of the political context and economic levers that are necessary for a regional solution.

CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This review of the literature examines issues surrounding racially and economically isolated schools, statistics on segregation and poverty in schools, and the benefits of racially and economically diverse schools. The primary objective of this literature review is to explore the impact of racial and economic segregation on the educational and social outcomes for African American, Latina/o, and White youth from historical, social, political, and cultural perspectives.

Education Research Complete was searched for scholarly peer reviewed articles in English. In addition, ERIC ProQuest Advanced was searched for articles published in scholarly journals in English between the years 1991 to 2013. Key words used in Education Research Complete were: racial and economically isolated schools; poverty and schools; racial diversity in schools; and benefits of economically diverse schools. The key words used in ERIC ProQuest Advanced were: educational apartheid; closing the achievement gap; effective strategies and closing the achievement gap; poverty, race, and achievement; racial diversity in k-12 education; benefits of racially and economically diverse schools; educational outcomes of Black students; economic diversity and court cases; issues with economic desegregation; and possible solutions to economic diversity.

Terms and Definitions

For the purposes of this paper, the following terms and definitions will apply: the term "race" shall refer to one's race and ethnicity; the terms "African American" and "Black" will be used interchangeably to describe U.S. born people of color of African descent; the terms "diversity," "integrated" and "desegregated" will refer to the optimal composition of race and socioeconomics possessed by a student body in a school, classroom, or other educational settings.

Furthermore, the terms “segregated” and “isolated” will be used to specify a lack of diversity possessed by a school, classroom, or other educational setting with respect to race and economic status. The terms “economic,” “socioeconomic,“ or “socioeconomic status (SES)” will be used interchangeably and refer to students’ families or schools’ relative income status or wealth. “Low-income” students will refer to students who are eligible for free or reduced lunch. Finally, “high poverty” schools, as noted by Kahlenberg (2012), will refer to a school having an enrollment of over fifty percent of students who receive free or reduced lunch service.

A Historical Overview of Racial Segregation

In 1881, Frederick Douglas described the multiple issues surrounding racial and economic segregation in the United States as *The Color Line* (Pettiford-Wates, 2013). Black Americans were socially and legally separated from Whites during the 1800s and beyond. They were remanded to racially segregated churches, hospitals, neighborhoods, movie theaters, restaurants, and schools. The isolation of Black children in educational institutions across the United States was intractable until the 1950s. Major progress was made through the courts to desegregate schools. However, de facto segregation persisted even after federal mandates required states to integrate schools “with all deliberate speed” (Siegel-Hawley et al, 2013). Dr. W.E.B. Dubois declared the ramifications of this apartheid-based social system, as the problem of the 20th century (Pettiford-Wates, 2013). Apartheid indicates a system of oppression designed to enforce social restrictions and rewards along racial lines.

Race is a cultural and social construct devised to overtly classify human beings according to physical characteristics. Johann Friedrich Blumenbach identified the major racial categories in his influential treatise *On the Natural Variety of Mankind* (Weizmann, 2004). Racial differences are created in social, political, historical, geographical, and cultural contexts to separate

dominant groups from subordinate groups (Adams, Blumenfeld, Castaneda, Hackman, Peters, & Zuniga, 2010).

During the Reconstruction Era, Black Americans struggled to overcome stereotypes promulgated by the dominant culture. Some of the typical stereotypes such as lazy, unethical, irresponsible, and unintelligent, still persist today. According to Adams et al., (2010) "to the extent that those in the target group internalize the constructs that the dominant group imposes on them, they may find it difficult to believe in their own ability" (p.7). The lack of economic mobility and educational attainment achieved by members of targeted groups, such as African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans suggest a high degree of self-loathing or internalized oppression (Adams, et al., 2010).

Since the first African Americans arrived in this country, they have consistently resisted the dehumanizing apartheid system. When Frederick Douglas realized that the ban on educating enslaved Africans was instituted in order to sustain a system of inequality and oppression, he retaliated against it by learning to read despite the impending threat of bodily harm. His ardent campaign against slavery and illiteracy inspired abolitionists to protest for equal rights on both moral and legal grounds. Yet, recent generations of Black youth consider the behavior of studious peers to constitute, acting White.

Today, proponents of public education are engaged in the persistent struggle to overcome the insidious effects of segregated schools. Looking at the disparities in reading and math scores for Blacks and Whites, as well as Hispanics and Whites reveals a formidable challenge. To neutralize the adverse effects of decades of oppression, particularly the consequences of derisory education for African Americans, is going to require a concerted effort from all stakeholders. In

order to ensure the academic success of historically oppressed students, the social and political will of communities must shift.

Issues Surrounding Racially and Economically Isolated School

One of the major problems of 21st century education is racially and economically isolated schools. Siegel-Hawley et al. (2013) indicate that there are "persistent harms associated with racially isolated schools" (p. 5). These problems include but are not limited to a preponderance of unqualified teachers, inadequate curricula to meet the sociocultural needs of students, disproportionate numbers of students with special concerns, and limited access to advanced technology. A racially isolated school is considered intensely segregated when less than 10% of the student population is non-Black or non-Latina/o. Similarly, according to Siegel-Hawley et al. (2013), a school is considered to be an apartheid institution [school] when less than 1% of the student population is non-Black or non-Latina/o.

Fram, Miller-Cribbs, & Van Horn (2007) contend that a significant number of students attend racially and economically segregated schools in the U.S. south. According to Tough (2008), there are more White Americans living in poverty than Black Americans. However, the poverty rate of 24% for Blacks is three times higher than the poverty rate for Whites. Yet, the rate of Black children growing up in long-term poverty—at least nine years during their childhood—is an alarming 80%.

In this section, an historical context on the origins of "Black poverty" and its contributions to the achievement gap between Whites and poor Black children is addressed. Next, the linkage between poverty, inequality, and racially and economically isolated schools is exposed through precipitous factors, which threaten educational outcomes of Black and Latina/o

students. Finally, a brief synopsis is given, with a look toward the future, of what this nation must and can do to guarantee an equitable education for all children.

A traumatic legacy of separate-and-unequal. The roots of long-term poverty can be traced to legal sanctions against African Americans, embedded in the U.S. constitution, Slave Codes, and Jim Crow laws. These edicts designated race as an indelible line separating "insiders" from "outsiders" (Adams, et. al., 2010). White people were endowed with social and economic privileges, whereas "others" were restricted to systematic disadvantages.

Evidence of the perpetual impact of this socio-historical legacy is implicated in the disproportionate number of African American students assigned to remedial and special education classes (Patton, 1998; Street, 2005). Also, the assumption of some teachers, school administrators, and politicians that students of color are not as educable as Whites, can be correlated to the apartheid laws that ruled the nation (Street, 2005). In addition, the hidden agenda of the accountability movement, which allegedly aims to privatize public education, unfairly punishes racially and economically segregated schools (Balfour, 2003; Bankston III & Caldas, 1996; Patton, 1998; & Ravitch, 2010).

History affords us the opportunity to learn from past misdeeds. Hence, the apparent resegregation and persistent inferior status of urban, poor, predominantly Black and Latina/o public schools, compels the nation to respond with urgency. Street (2005), argues the formula employed to finance public education creates funding disparities between wealthier and poorer school districts. These districts, incidentally, are suburban, predominantly White, and urban, predominantly Black and Latina/o, respectively. The impact of race and socioeconomic status on academic achievement is a perennial social justice issue with well-documented long-term consequences (Fram et al., 2007).

The final report, *A Nation At Risk* (ANAR), which was released in 1983, propelled the nation into an accountability driven reform movement resulting in state mandated standardized testing. According to Ravitch (2010), "our national educational system ended up with no curricular goals, low standards, and dumbed-down tests" (p. 23). Public schools with high-poverty and high Black and Latina/o populations struggle to meet state mandated benchmarks. Longitudinal studies indicate that African American and Latina/o students consistently score lower on literacy tests than White students (Li & Hasan, 2010).

Factors contributing to failing schools. The seeds that were sewn decades ago from a protracted and ugly history of racism and inequality have harvested today in the form of racially and economically isolated schools. These schools produce inequitable conditions that severely limit educational opportunities and outcomes for non-White students. This is particularly true for Blacks and Latinos who are further marginalized when they attend schools that are racially and economically segregated (Caldas & Bankston, 1998).

Siegel-Hawley (2012) contend that these isolated schools are often associated with a variety of educational harms including lesser qualified teachers, higher student discipline issues and rates of mobility, over identification of students with special needs, and high drop-out and lower graduation rates. These harmful factors, Siegel-Hawley (2013) further suggests, have an immediate and long-term impact on a student's ability to succeed in school and later in life.

Lack of highly qualified teachers. Racially and economically isolated schools fail for very specific reasons. Some are obvious like family income and mobility rate and others are more subtle, like teacher quality and access to resources. Yet, teachers have the greatest impact on student achievement (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). However, teachers in racially and economically isolated schools are often new teachers or teachers with little experience compared

to their counterparts in more affluent schools (Orfield et al., 2012). Many teachers find these challenging schools too difficult and leave the profession or leave for better paying and less challenging work in other schools.

A study by the Cedar Grove Institute for Sustainable Communities found that in North Carolina, schools that were more than 75% Black were less likely to have fully licensed teachers than schools that were more diverse. It also noted that these schools were significantly less likely to have teachers with advanced degrees (Moss & Osmet, 2010). The Study also noted that these schools were under-identifying Black students as gifted and the teachers working with special education students lacked training. In addition to creating more diverse schools, districts need to focus on equitable distribution of quality teachers.

Student discipline. Student discipline is often worse at racially and economically isolated schools. Discipline penalties are more severe and expulsion rates are higher than at more affluent, less diverse schools (Orfield, 2012). This is related to student engagement, which Orfield also discusses. He contends that in more affluent schools, students have little difficulty with standardized tests, and therefore the teachers are free to be more creative with the curriculum. In challenging schools, teachers are under much more pressure because of the impact of high stakes testing, which affects teacher morale, student engagement and community perceptions.

Higher mobility rate. Racially and economically isolated schools also tend to have a higher mobility rate than more affluent schools. Low socioeconomic families in urban areas are highly susceptible to transiency (Pawasarat & Stetzer, 1998; Lovel & Oh, 2004). High pupil turnover is associated with lower student achievement (Alexander & Entwisle, 1996).

Economically disadvantaged students also have less access to extracurricular activities. All of these factors contribute to the low performance of racially and economically isolated school.

Dropout epidemic. School districts charged with educating students from predominantly Black and Latina/o populations and neighborhoods with high concentrations of poverty are plagued with lower graduation rates and higher dropout rates. African American and Latina/o students lag far behind their White counterparts in high school completion. A 2013 study confirms the relationship between school-wide student demographics and graduation rates. Riddle (2013) sites Orfield et al. (2012) noting that economically and racially isolated schools are underperforming for a multitude of reasons and "segregated schools are more likely to have inferior teachers, higher rates of teacher turnover, fewer educational resources, lower achieving peer groups, and less challenging curriculums" (p.11).

The lopsided graduation rates for Black and Latina/o students is a reflection of the opportunity gap, which hinders the literacy and earning potential of the nation. For example, Orfield (2004) reported that an increase in high school graduation rates of just one-percent can reduce crime related costs by as much as $1.4 billion each year. Although the purpose of schooling is more complex than preparing students for economic success, the need to equip Black and Latina/o students with the skills to thrive in a global economy must be a national priority (Slaughter-Defoe, 2005).

According to Orfield (2004), each year, an alarming percentage of students in U.S. schools, mostly African American, Latina/o, and poor, disappear from what he calls the educational pipeline. Nationally, only 50% of all Black, Hispanic, and Native Americans students who entered ninth grade graduate from high school four years later. These figures are even more dismal for African American and Latino males.

School to prison pipeline. Western, Schiraldi, and Ziedenberg conducted a study centered on U.S. Justice Department data that reported two-thirds of the nation's inmates were dropouts. The study indicated that 52% of African American male dropouts, between the ages of thirty to thirty-four, have criminal records (Orfield, 2004). The social and economic prognosis for these individuals, their communities, and the nation as a whole is catastrophic (Orfield, 2004).

Three studies (Bankston III, 1996; Fram, 2007; & Margo, 1986) examined literacy rates for Black and Latina/o youth and uncovered a correlation between fourth grade reading levels and future incarceration. One study reported that 1 out of 4 Black males is in jail or under court supervision. According to Alexander (2010), there are more Black college age men entangled in the criminal justice system, than enrolled in university classes.

Special education. A disproportionate number of inmates in U.S. prisons were previously assigned to special education classes and stigmatized by the inherent label associated with this classification. Patton (1998) contends, there is an overrepresentation of boys of color in special education programs, which has been "a persistent problem negatively affecting large numbers of African Americans and their families" (p. 25).

Effects of poverty on student performance. Many of our schools around the country, especially in urban areas continue to be unequal. There is a dual segregation happening in many of our nation's schools. Students are being separated by race and socioeconomic status (SES). Studies have shown that school systems in low-socioeconomic areas are underfunded compared to other districts (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008). Students from low-SES schools simply do not perform at the same level as students from schools with higher SES levels. A 2008 study showed that students from low-SES schools entered high school an average of 3.3 years behind

students from high-SES schools. The study also showed that these students learned less while in high school and fell further behind their higher-SES peers (Palardy, 2008). Students from low-SES schools are also less likely to finish high school. A longitudinal study by the National Center for Education Statistics showed the high school dropout rate was highest in low-income families (16.7%) as compared to high-income families (3.2%) (Riddle, 2013).

This is a crisis and it cannot be ignored. Statistics not only reveal adverse effects on the lives of the students who are being underserved, but also on our regional and national economy. A 2009 study out of the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University estimates that high school drop outs, on average, costs society $292,000 in lost tax revenue and other costs such as social services and incarceration (Sum, Khatiwada, & McLaughlin, 2009). The study also noted that young Black males who dropped out of high school have one of the highest incarceration rates of any group. According to this study, 23 of every 100 young Black male adults were institutionalized compared to six or seven for every 100 Asians, Hispanics, and Whites (Sum, Khatiwada, & McLaughlin, 2009). These numbers have a tremendous economic impact on society, but more importantly, the United States has a moral obligation to help these young people who are being marginalized by society.

Educating all children in the 21st century. There is a disproportionate number of Black and Latina/o students that continue to receive a separate and unequal education because they attend racially and economically isolated schools. America must resolve to do something about this injustice. African American novelist James Baldwin once offered the provocative idea that there is no such thing as Whiteness or, for that matter, Blackness, that race is a social construct (Adams, et. al., 2010).

Longitudinal studies have determined that equitable education should be instituted before the formal k-12 process commences. Graduates of Head Start programs enter kindergarten more advanced than their inner city peers. However, by second or third grade, those exemplary students regress to the same anemic levels of achievement, as their neighborhood peers (Tough, 2008). Ironically, only a few years of racially and economically segregated schooling are powerful enough to wipe out academic progress.

As the educational system is compelled to adapt to changing demographics, a cultural, social, and legal framework, which guarantees access to quality public education for all of our children is indispensable. Slaughter-Defoe (2005) believes, it is critical to include "equitable education as a right for all citizens in our Constitution, just as the new South Africa has done in its Constitution" (p. 42).

Now that a greater understanding is gained on the historical roots of Black poverty and education inequality, the focus turns to the political and legal structures which for decades have seemingly been complicit as impediments to change or to improve these conditions. The next section provides a brief history of how the intertwining of race, segregation, and educational inequity has played out in our legal system. For decades, and even now, legal rulings and political pressures have presented obstacles to effectively desegregate our schools, even while the courts have acknowledged that diversity should have a place in our nation's schools.

The Political and Legal Framework

Lack of political will and legal hurdles. The case can be made that the political will to desegregate our schools no longer exists. Noted legal scholar, Derrick Bell, acknowledges the challenge of widespread desegregation. Frankenberg and Debray quote Bell saying:

> While school desegregation is a worthy goal, it has become politically unfeasible, particularly in light of demographic realities and legal rulings, the most recent being the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1* (Frankenberg & Debray, 2011, p.1).

The political landscape creates a challenging obstacle, but activists of desegregation now have years of social science evidence that proves long-term positive effects on students and society through desegregation (Frankenberg & Debray, 2011). Later sections of this literature review will further highlight the positive effects of socioeconomic and racial integration.

The political and legal landscape does make racial desegregation more difficult, but the United States government acknowledges the worthiness of desegregation through a document updated as recently as 2012. The United States government, through the Office of Civil Rights has issued a document titled, *Guidance on the Voluntary Use of Race to Achieve Diversity and Avoid Racial Isolation in Elementary and Secondary School* ("Guidance on the," 2012). The document clearly states in its introduction, "where schools lack a diverse student body or are racially isolated (i.e., are composed overwhelmingly of students of one race), they may fail to provide the full panoply of benefits that K-12 schools can offer " ("Guidance on the," 2012). While race should not be the only factor used to achieve desegregation, it certainly should be a factor. This study also acknowledges that there are benefits to diverse learning environments.

Shifting nationwide demographics, political will, and the legal landscape are real challenges to desegregation, but the negative consequences of segregated schools that have been previously explained cannot be ignored. Furthermore, studies have found that schools with diverse populations provide clear benefits that segregated schools cannot provide (Frankenberg and Debray, 2011).

Housing segregation further exacerbates the problem and complicates the issues in federal court rulings. Housing and education go hand in hand as schools have an effect on a housing market and vice versa. This was discussed in the courts prior to *Parents Involved* in *Freeman v. Pitts* (1992) where Justice Anthony Kennedy argued "resegregation is a product not of state action but of private choices, it does not have constitutional implications." He goes on to state "it is beyond the authority of the federal courts to try to counteract these continuous and massive demographic shifts" (Freeman v. Pitts, 1992). Some would argue that many families and individuals lack appropriate choices for housing. According to a report by the National Commission on Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity housing discrimination is still widespread in both urban and suburban areas (2008). The effects of fair housing practices cannot be overlooked when discussing desegregation. The housing options are limited for socio-economically challenged families, which is further institutionalizing school segregation. The challenge for states and localities will be to find race neutral ways to desegregate schools across geographic lines for the benefit of all students.

The legal fight for diversity in schools. Landmark legislation had begun to pave the way for the rationale of school diversity long before its benefits were realized. In the 1954 landmark Supreme Court decision, *Brown vs. Board of Education*, the court ruled that the "separate but equal" doctrine—a cornerstone argument for Jim Crow segregationist—was unconstitutional. During the next decade, and despite community demands for more to be done to fully integrate schools, efforts to dismantle segregated school systems met great resistance, particularly in the South (Bhargava, Frankenberg, & Le, 2008). It was not until the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that any meaningful school desegregation efforts began. From the mid-1960s to the early 1970s, the U.S. Department of Justice was empowered to initiate

desegregation lawsuits against school districts still practicing segregation, and to ensure compliance, it withheld federal funds from non-complying school districts as leverage (Bhargava et al., 2008).

A number of important Supreme Court rulings were handed down during this period which gave legitimacy and valuable support to desegregation efforts including: *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County* (1968); *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* (1971); and *Keyes v. School District No. 1* (1973). However, during the 1990s, the Supreme Court stepped in again and shifted the debate on school desegregation jurisprudence. In three important decisions, *Oklahoma City Board of Education v. Dowell* (1991), *Freeman v. Pitts* (1992), *and Missouri v. Jenkins* (1995), the Court effectively permitted federal courts to declare a school system "unitary", allowing them to no longer be subject to a court order to desegregate (Bhargava et al., 2008).

Supporters of school desegregation efforts regarded this change as a weakening of the Supreme Court's responsibility and obligation to desegregate schools. This led to a large number of school districts being declared unitary and many districts—with support from parents and the community—fought back federal court supervision and other legal hurdles to segregation policies altogether. In recent years, as public knowledge of the importance of integrated schools and classrooms have surfaced, parents, academic and civic leaders, and other school desegregation advocates began mounting an offensive; this was largely achieved through school districts adopting voluntary integration policies. In 2006, the filing of *amicus briefs* with the Supreme Court on behalf of voluntary integration cases happening in districts across the country provided additional support in school integration efforts. The amicus briefs were vehicles to

present the social science evidence which concluded that research points to numerous benefits of diversity in schools (Bhargava et al., 2008).

A year later, in 2007, a Supreme Court case which unexpectedly provided more ammunition to the school diversity argument, was *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1* (2007). Despite the overall ruling in this case, which placed limits on ways school districts may use a student's race to integrate schools, five of the Supreme Court Justices declared that there is a compelling government interest in promoting diversity and avoiding racial isolation (Holmes, 2004; Bhargava et al, 2008; Tefera, Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, & Chirichignio, 2011; Clayton, 2011). This ruling, coupled with the *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003) Supreme Court decision—a higher education case which reaffirmed the critical role education plays in our democracy, and where the Court acknowledged that effective participation by members of all racial and ethnic groups is essential to an indivisible nation—underscores the importance of pursuing diversity in K-12 education (Tefera et al., 2011).

In the next section, a look at the positive effects of diverse schools helps to bolster the claim that there is a compelling interest to promote diversity and avoid racial and economic isolation in schools.

Impact of Racially and Economically Diverse Schools

Over time, as a better perspective and understanding on the harmful effects of racially and economically isolated schools have become more apparent, further evidence in the research reveals benefits associated with integrated schools. In this section, a discussion of those benefits—both short and long-term—will be addressed. The context of this dialogue is framed around the demographic shift experienced by the United States during the last half century (Clayton, 2011). America is becoming a more globalized marketplace, and a continual migration

of people to the U.S. is leading to a more multiracial and multicultural society. Siegel-Hawley and Frankenberg (2012) conclude that the growing diversity in the U.S. brings a different set of opportunities and challenges for educational leaders and policymakers who are in pursuit of vibrant, inclusive learning environments.

Benefits of diversity. Diversity in schools is an important aspect of student learning and well-roundedness; a diverse student body can help prepare children of all races for citizenship in an ever-increasing multicultural society. Holmes (2004) contends that children of all races and ethnicities become better learners, develop more positive attitudes toward other races, and are better prepared to live and work in a diverse society and workforce. The United States is becoming a more diverse nation, and according to the Census Bureau, the U.S. is projected to become a majority-minority nation for the first time in 2043 ("U.S. Census Bureau," 2012). As our nation continues to moves toward an increasingly multicultural society, our students will need to develop skills necessary to better understand, live, and effectively work with others of different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

An integrated, structured educational setting produces immediate educational and lasting social, political and economic benefits to society (Bhargava et al., 2008). Years of research on the topic of school diversity reveals three basic benefits or outcomes for children who attend racially and economically integrated schools, they include: (1) short-term learning outcomes such as improved academic performance and higher student aspirations; (2) long-term educational and occupational outcomes such as college attendance and career attainment; and (3) social outcomes such as improved racial attitudes and relations, and citizenship (Caldas & Bankston, 1998; Holes, 2004; Rumberger & Palardy G., 2005; Bhargava et al, 2008; Tefera et al, 201l; Palardy, 2013).

Short-term outcomes. Decades of research have proven that student achievement is higher for Blacks and Latinos when they attend racially integrated schools and where the average SES in the school is middle-class to higher (Bhargava et al., 2008; Tefera, et al., 2011). Clayton (2011) suggests that it is difficult to untangle the effects of racial and SES on student outcomes. Rumberger and Palardy (2005) further add, both race and SES composition matters in terms of a student's achievement because these two characteristics are closely correlated, and both are strongly related to the influence of his or her peers. This social composition mix and the influence of a child's peers, contribute to short-term outcomes such as academic achievement, deeper ways of thinking, and higher aspirations.

Academic achievement. The *Grutter* case, which upheld diversity as a compelling interest, relied heavily on social science research that documented the positive impact a diverse classroom has on student educational outcomes (Holmes, 2004). Other researchers have amassed similar results examining the relationship between diversity and academic achievement. Rumberger (2005) argues that the 1966 Coleman Report was the first significant national study to demonstrate that students' academic achievement is more correlated to the characteristics of other students in the school than any other characteristic. Moreover, that study revealed that the two contributing factors were the personal SES of the student and that of his more affluent peers. This "peer effect" was most impactful on student achievement of all racial groups in schools with higher concentrations of White students, who had better educational backgrounds and higher aspirations.

As previously alluded to, research concludes that Black and latina/o students perform better in schools with higher concentrations of Whites and higher socioeconomics. This was demonstrated in a well-known study conducted in Chicago by Kaufman and Rosenbaum (1992);

they investigated how Black youth were affected by living in White, middle-class suburban neighborhoods. The study centered on the Gautreaux program—a government funded program to remedy a Chicago housing discrimination lawsuit—designed to assist low-income Black families move to into private housing throughout Chicago using rent subsidies.

Over 4,000 families moved through the program, some moved to primarily White suburbs, while others moved to Black urban areas. A component of the study examined Black students attending subsequent White, suburban schools and those attending Black urban schools. The study revealed that students attending the suburban schools had significantly higher reading scores, higher reading ACT college admissions test scores for 11th graders, and the graduation rates were higher than participants who attended the urban schools.

In a second study noted by Holmes (2004), the findings of the 1993-1994 Iowa Test of Basic Skills, were examined. The study showed that segregated primary schools had a negative impact on Black students. In every segregated school Black students scored below the national average. In the same study, Holmes (2004) was also able to bolster the argument that the educational benefits of attending racially diverse schools not only benefits Black and Latinos alone, but also White students as well. This was demonstrated by a jump in scores of almost twenty percentage points for all student groups.

Cognitive effects. Racial diversity among peers in school settings creates cognitive and social benefits that all children experience. Kahlenburg (2012) concludes that students who are exposed to diverse learning environments are able to learn skills that give them new ways to see and understand life. Their racial perceptions are challenged as different points of view based on culture and unique upbringing are introduced. Additionally, diversity among peers creates other

cognitive benefits such as problem-solving and critical thinking skills that lead to changes in values and beliefs (Change, Astin, & Kim, 2004).

A qualitative study by Carey (2009) explored the educational effects of providing diverse learning environments for students attending an ethnically diverse magnet high school. This revealed that the magnet school experience had a considerable and favorable impact on students' knowledge of other cultures. Additionally, it generated dialogue on issues related to race, promoted racial understanding, improved their problem-solving skills, ability to cooperate with others, resolve conflict, and improved leadership ability.

Higher student aspirations. Tefera et al. (2011) and Bhargava et al. (2008) uphold that higher aspirations, as a result of integrated schools, have been linked to higher expectations of students found within these schools. Wells and Crain (1994) identify several studies that demonstrated when students were in desegregated settings they had considerably higher career aspirations. One study involved an inter-district busing plan, Project Concern, which was implemented in Hartford, Connecticut in 1966. It was an experiment in which 265 Black students from low-income area schools were bussed to five suburban, predominantly White schools. The Black students who participated were found to have significantly higher career aspirations and better career planning and progression follow-through. In the second study noted by Wells (1994), where the aspirations and expectations of segregated and desegregated Black students were observed, it was found that the desegregated students had higher career aspirations and their aspirations were more realistic.

Long-term outcomes. Dawkins and Braddock (1994) emphasized the significant role segregated and desegregated school experiences have on students. They argue that not only do these factors impact academic and psychological outcomes but also long-term outcomes such as

college attainment and selection, access to formal and informal social networks that provide job information and contacts, supports necessary for career advancement, and social outcomes. Evidence of the national segregation problem can be found in the most recent census data. The average White child attends a school that is often more than seventy-five percent White. Furthermore, twenty-five percent of low-income children attend a school with very few students that are considered middle or upper middle class. Additionally, thirty-three percent of Black and Latina/o students attend schools where ninety or more percent of the students are minority. In America's Northeast, over fifty percent of Black students attend schools that have a majority of Black students (Costello, 2012).

College access and preference. Black and Latina/o students who attend diverse schools, those filled with White and wealthy students, benefit from the schools' formal and informal networks that aid them in attending competitive colleges (Bhargava et al., 2008; Wells & Crain, 1994). For example, in a research study conducted by Wells (1994), which observed college preparatory activities of Black students from inner-city St. Louis who attended predominantly White and middle-class high schools in the suburbs, it was demonstrated that these students greatly benefitted from access to well-connected contacts that they would not otherwise have access to in an all-Black segregated school. The additional benefits these students enjoyed included attending college fairs, access to information about the college application process, and having a school counselor who would remind them of college opportunities and deadlines and who also had strong ties to college admissions offices across the country (Wells, 1994).

Not only does having access to broad networks have an impact on a students' ability to get into college, but their college preferences are strongly influenced by their peers. Bhargava et al. (2008) make claim of the strong connection between Black students attending a school with a

White racial composition and attendance at predominantly White colleges. In a synthesis of research of evidence on the long-term effects of school integration and educational and career advancement of Blacks, Dawkins (1994) makes a compelling case that racial composition of students' elementary and secondary school affect their choices for college. This is significant because by the age of 24, only about 10% of low income students are able to complete a college degree (Rotherman, 2010).

The first study, performed by Braddock in 1972, was a survey of Black students who attended four-year colleges in Florida, and examined the high school racial composition, SES, and other factors. In a second study conducted by Braddock in 1982, similar social composition and academic characteristics were studied at elementary and secondary schools using a subsample of Blacks from the National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972. Both studies concluded that Blacks who have been educated in integrated elementary and secondary schools are more likely to attend predominantly White colleges.

Job attainment. As the previous section highlights, broad and interwoven networks in White, wealthy schools benefit Blacks in college entrance and preferences. These same networks overlap from college to the workplace and provide access to higher paying jobs and guide decisions on career choices. Several research studies identified by Wells (1994) support this argument. The first study was conducted by Crain in 1966 when he examined data from a survey of over 1,200 Blacks, ranging from ages 21 to 45, who attended a segregated or integrated high school, and who reported having an occupation.

After an analysis of the results in this study, a close relationship between Blacks' current occupation and the type of school they attended was evident. One fifth of the respondents who attended segregated schools reported working in "traditional" blue-collar occupations such as

service work and labor, while one third of the respondents who attended integrated high schools worked in three nontraditional Black occupations including crafts, sales, and other professional jobs. In a second study two years later, in 1968, Crain analyzed the annual incomes of Black alumni of integrated high schools, and found that they had annual incomes of about $10,000 more than alumni of segregated schools. A similar pattern of occupational selection and differential income levels was also observed with Black women, who attended a segregated or integrated high school.

Attitudinal and social effects. Recent studies have shown that students attending diverse schools have higher levels of comfort with members of other racial groups, regardless of their racial or ethnic background. The reason, Bhargava et al. (2008) surmises, is that students in integrated schools tend to have more cross-racial friendships and acquaintances. Moreover, racially integrated learning environments can reduce stereotypes, lower prejudices and feelings of isolation, and promote cross-racial and cultural understanding for students of all racial backgrounds (Wells, 1994; Kurlaender and Yun, 2007; Bhargava et al., 2008). The increased comfort level and reduced prejudices experienced by students of segregated schools create a greater sense of civic engagement and desire to live and work in multicultural surroundings relative to their more segregated peers (Kurlaender, 2007).

The long-term social impact of diverse school settings has been most evident in both Black and White ethnic groups. Dawkins (1994) presented social evidence strongly suggesting that interracial exposure in school can reduce Blacks' tendency to avoid Whites and break the "self-perpetuating" cycle of segregation, which Kurlaender (2007) argues is the most persuasive evidence to of the impact of racial segregation. In a synthesis of 21 studies which applied the perpetuation theory, Wells (1994) concluded that desegregated experiences for Black students

led to increased interaction with members of other races later in life. Finally, new research indicates that when Whites attend racially integrated schools, they exhibit greater acceptance for other races than their more segregated peers (Bhargava et al., 2008). This is beneficial to White students because they are more likely to attend isolated schools (Tefera, 2011).

Designing diverse learning opportunities. The negative consequences of racially and economically isolated schools are profound. There is value in schools that are racially and economically diverse, but simply bringing students together under one roof is not enough. For example, placing a magnet program of predominantly White students within a largely minority school, but never having the students intermingle will not create a diverse learning experience. A school that attempts to champion diversity needs to create diverse learning opportunities or DLOs (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2007). These are deliberate programs with specific experiences that allow students of different races and ethnicities to learn with and from students of different backgrounds (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2007).

Research suggests that stereotypes and prejudices formed at a young age are difficult to change in adulthood (Mahard & Crane, 1983). It is imperative that students—even in the earliest grades—have diverse learning experiences. Simply having students together for selected subjects or programs is not enough. Students need to be integrated throughout the school day across all programs. Even within diverse schools, tracking and ability grouping can further segregate students. School policy needs to be clear about how students will be grouped and how differentiated instruction will be delivered.

Effective DLOs involve quality teaching and authentic experiences. These learning opportunities should include cooperative learning, complex instruction, reciprocal teaching, peer tutoring, and differentiated instruction. These strategies require well-trained, experienced

teachers for effective implementation. Furthermore, these sound teaching strategies can provide students with essential diverse learning opportunities (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2007).

A school that values diversity should also have specific curricula and experiences that build students' social cognition. Giving students experiences where they can work with learners of other backgrounds toward a shared goal is shown to have a positive effect on their social cognition and produces positive outcomes such as increased cross-race attitudes, friendships, and conflict resolution skills (Slavin, 1990). Quality teachers who create high expectations for all students can provide the greatest constructive outcome for lasting positive social development.

Overall, school culture is difficult to quantify but it plays an important role in the effectiveness of a diverse learning experience. School leadership needs to recognize that there are differences between races and students from different backgrounds. Having a solid conflict resolution program in place is important. Teachers and school leaders need to be mindful of "equity traps" (McKenzie and Scheurich, 2003). Equity traps are a false sense of security or a thinking that discrimination and prejudice are a thing of the past and not present in their school. There needs to be a system for dealing with conflict and a willingness to have difficult conversations about race. School staff will need continued professional development to address specific challenges around cultural sensitivity and conflict resolution.

There is agreement among researchers that having students together from diverse backgrounds can enhance students' achievement and their cognitive development. Diverse learning supports pro-social skills and societal impact for individuals and communities (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2007). The research is clear that simply bringing students together under one roof is not enough. There needs to be a collective effort from the school

administration and the teachers to create DLOs that increase the expectations and opportunities for all students.

Local resources. Hawley (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2007) argues that "implementable strategies" must be identified in order to formulate DLOs that benefit students in racially and ethnically integrated schools. In addition to academic success, the social development of students is critically important. Attending a school with a diverse student population can significantly enhance intercultural competency and social cognition, which is the ability to effectively interact with people from different cultural backgrounds (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2007). Both skills are marketable in a global economy.

There are established organizations in the Richmond metro area that could support the development of a regional school with a focus on diversity, by providing training and consultation to the staff, administration, students, parents, and other stakeholders. For example, the Richmond Peace Education Center (RPEC) conducts conflict resolution training for schools, community organizations, and corporations. "Initiated in 1980, the center has been a leading voice for nonviolence and social justice for more than 30 years" ("Richmond Peace Education Center," 2013). In addition, RPEC provides conflict resolution programs specifically geared toward youth in elementary, secondary, and post-secondary schools. The Richmond Youth Peace Project is a "youth-led social change effort, in which RPEC trains teenagers to teach nonviolent conflict resolution to other youth throughout the region" ("Richmond Peace Education Center," 2013).

Two important skills that both youth and adults acquire from conflict resolution training are the ability to engage in active listening and effective communication. These abilities are essential in dealing with conflicts and participating in courageous conversations about race. The

Conciliation Project (TCP) is another established organization in the Richmond metro area that could assist with training stakeholders of a regional school that specializes in diversity. The Conciliation Project is a Richmond-based social justice theatre company that "aims to promote open and honest dialogue about racism in America, in order to repair its damaging legacy" ("The Conciliation Project," 2013).

Dr. Tawnya Pettiford-Wates, founder and artistic director of TCP, contends that the methods and techniques utilized in every production "can catalyze heartfelt conversations about race and racism and systems of oppression — conversations that have the potential to start healing society's scars" (Wren, 2013). This form of cultural communication is a powerful tool for building bridges between disparate groups.

Cultivating the academic prowess and social intelligence of diverse student populations are integral goals of DLOs (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2007). These measurable assets are cultivated within schools and other types of organizations by The Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities (VCIC). This established organization in the Richmond metro area "works with schools, businesses, and communities to achieve success by addressing prejudices, in all forms, in order to improve academic achievement, increase workplace productivity, and enhance local trust" ("Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities," 2013). VCIC partnered with Henrico County Public Schools to create the Coalition for Equitable and Inclusive Schools. This coalition brought administrators, teachers, and other staff together to identify areas for improving cultural awareness within their schools.

The negative effects of racially and economically segregated schools are apparent in school districts across the nation. Social science research, as previously noted, provides evidence and gives hope, that creating diverse learning environments can reverse the trend of segregation

in our nation's schools. In the next section, we learn that Virginia school divisions are not immune from the problems that plague other impoverished areas.

Trends in Virginia

The national trends of racial and economic isolation, and its impact on students and schools, holds true here in the Commonwealth of Virginia. A study performed by Riddle (2013) in 2011 confirms the relationship between school-wide student demographics and graduation rates in Virginia schools. Riddle (2013) sites Orfield et al. (2012), noting that economically and racially isolated schools are underperforming for a multitude of reasons and "segregated schools are more likely to have inferior teachers, higher rates of teacher turnover, fewer educational resources, lower achieving peer groups, and less challenging curriculums" (p.11). This section provides evidence of student segregation in Virginia and locally, then revisits Riddle's 2013 study, illustrating its impact.

Segregation in Virginia. The increasing socioeconomic and racial segregation of students in schools is ongoing throughout the country, across the state of Virginia, and particularly here in the Richmond area. A recent study found that the number of intensely segregated schools (90% or more minority) in Virginia has more than doubled between 1989 and 2010. Taking the entire state into account, 16% of Virginia's students attend "intensely segregated schools." In the Richmond metro area, over one-third of Black students attended intensely segregated schools and almost ten percent attend apartheid schools where less than one percent of the students are non-minority (Siegel-Hawley et. al, 2013). This same study found that the Richmond metro area schools were more segregated than the two other metro areas in the state, Northern Virginia and the Norfolk-Virginia Beach-Newport News area.

Segregation in Richmond. Focusing on Richmond City schools, there is overwhelming statistical evidence that students are often severely isolated, racially and economically. In 2010, a typical Black student in the City of Richmond went to a school that had an average enrollment of 52% low-income students. Four percent of Richmond and Petersburg schools are considered apartheid schools. The entirety of Richmond's White student population is below 10% (Siegel-Hawley, 2013).

Impact of segregation. Riddle's study examined the 2011 graduating cohorts for 302 high schools in the state of Virginia. He found that across the state of Virginia, students are less likely to graduate from schools with higher concentrations of poverty. Across the state of Virginia, minority and economically disadvantaged students had a lower graduation rate than their White peers. On the other hand, students that attend racially diverse high schools are significantly more likely to graduate (Riddle, 2013).

Riddle also analyzed a portion of the graduating students that the Virginia Department of Education referred to as "economically disadvantaged anytime." The anytime designation means the students were part of the socioeconomic disadvantaged subgroup at any time during their high school enrollment ("State-level cohort report," 2012). This group of students underperformed compared to other subgroups. "In 2011, economically disadvantaged anytime students graduated at a rate of 79.1% as compared to 87.1% of all students" (Riddle, 2013, p.78). This achievement gap is real and there are ways to combat it. Riddle contends that there is need for policy that attempts to integrate high schools as a way to improve overall student performance. He states, "all students should learn in an environment where fewer than 50% of their peers are low-income and one where there is racial diversity, not segregation" (Riddle, 2013, p.18).

Possible solution. The challenge for Virginia and local school divisions is how to attain this diversity in isolated areas that lack racial and economic diversity. Furthermore, it is much more difficult to solve the issue of school desegregation within a school division when there is very little diversity within the division's population. One real possibility to solve segregation in Richmond schools—and increasingly, schools in the inner ring suburbs—is the creation of regional schools. When leaders came together in 2013 for the "Looking Back, Moving Forward" conference, a regional dialogue began, ideas were brainstormed, and the seed was planted for this study. The shared vision of those leaders, as well as the goal for this capstone project, is to increase educational opportunities for Richmond area youth by providing diverse settings and high quality instruction.

Conclusion

In his 1963 inaugural address, Governor George Wallace of Alabama stated, "I draw the line in the dust and toss the gauntlet before the feet of tyranny and I say segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever" (Clotfelter, 2004, p.13). A statement like this made by an American governor in 2014 is almost unthinkable. Yet, the facts are clear that in far too many parts of this country, segregation is widespread. Racial and economic segregation in our public schools is creating an achievement gap between poor minorities and their White counterparts.

Segregation today is not only about race, but also socioeconomic status. Students in high poverty schools have lower achievement and higher drop-out rates than students who attend low poverty schools (NCES, 2008). Educational achievement is not the only negative consequence of racially and economically isolated schools. Over identification of students for special education, higher incidences of student discipline and transiency are all symptoms of these

schools. The research is also clear on the financial impact of students not graduating from high school and the increase in incarceration rates for poor minorities who drop out of school. This national crisis represents major civil rights violations that must be addressed.

The United States is growing more diverse and the research highlights the need for the next generation of workers to have a better understanding of all races and cultures in order to be more competitive in the global economy. Studies have shown that all students benefit when they attend integrated schools. The cultural benefits of integrated schools are also clear. Students who attend racially integrated schools have higher civic engagement and a greater desire to live and work in a multicultural setting. They also exhibit more racial acceptance compared to their segregated peers (Bhargava et al., 2008). In a society that is growing more and more diverse, and in a global economy where traditional boundaries of commerce no longer exist, these socio-cultural benefits of desegregated schools cannot be overlooked.

The impact that racially and socioeconomically isolated schools have had on the students, the schools, and the communities they serve is real and profound. Unless viable solutions are explored and implemented immediately, students will continue to suffer. Policies must be addressed, leaders must be willing to talk openly about the subject, and make difficult decisions for the betterment of Richmond's students. This study hopes to reveal that a regional school might be a viable option, that money is available, and that there is public support. Creating such a school that increases racial and socioeconomic diversity within Richmond schools will have a meaningful impact on the students it serves. It will take money and political will for schools to desegregate. Many districts throughout the United States are currently implementing plans to address the racial and economic isolation of schools in their area, many more students would be well-served if their divisions, including Richmond, followed suit.

In the next chapter, Methodology, an overview of how the researchers intend to explore a regional school solution in metro Richmond is given. The research questions presented are used to guide this investigative process, and an appropriate study design which is outlined, ensured effective data collection and analysis of results.

CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Racially and economically segregated public schools are prevalent throughout the United States. The primary emphasis of this study was be to explore the perspectives of stakeholders related to the impact of racially and economically segregated public schools in the metro Richmond area. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research design and methodology of the study. The chapter is organized as follows: (1) statement of the problem; (2) research questions; (3) study design; (4) phases of the study, which includes the purpose of each phase, and where applicable, the participants in the study, instrumentation used, data collection methods, and approach to data analysis; and (5) assumptions and limitations.

Statement of the Problem

The growing opportunity and achievement gaps between and within school division in the Richmond area is a concern of late. Educational experts and researchers attribute these disparities in part to factors such as less qualified teachers, poor curricula, and inferior school facilities that are linked to racially and economically isolated enrollments (Ryan, 2010).

To help reverse the widening student opportunity and achievement gaps that are related to economic and racial isolation, there is a need to explore ways that advance educational equity and excellence in metro Richmond schools. One proposed solution is to create a regional middle school designed to provide equal educational opportunities within and across jurisdictions. The purpose of this study was to explore the possibility, feasibility, and desirability of a regional school that will address the ills of racial and socioeconomic isolation, while promoting diverse learning environments for schools in the metro Richmond area.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to help determine available options school districts across the nation have employed to promote racial and economic diversity; to understand the legal and regulatory framework with which these solutions would operate; and to better gauge the potential of a regional school solution:

(RQ1) What are the national trends in and solutions to addressing issues of racial and economic isolation?

(RQ2) What federal, state, and/or local legislation impacts the creation of a regional middle school?

(RQ3) What are the potential funding sources for creating a regional middle school?

(RQ4) Is there regional support to create a regional middle school?

Study Design

A *Transformative Participatory Approach* was utilized to explore stakeholder voices as it related to the topic of racial and economic diversity in the Richmond area, and it evaluated the possibility, feasibility, and desirability of a regional middle school in and for Richmond. This participatory approach, in other words, compelled the researchers to interact with their client and stakeholders in the region with the goal of promoting social change that benefits marginalized groups (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). This social justice methodology focused on responsive interaction between stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, parents, students, and community members seeking institutional change.

Through this approach, the researchers attempted to encourage action that was directly connected to the promotion of social justice, by addressing the power inequities that result from racially and economically segregated schools. This study narrowly focused on the systematic

effects of racially and economically segregated schools and addresses the benefits of diverse learning opportunities in public schools. A social justice perspective filtered the analytical lens of the researchers. The researchers gathered literature from social science research, conferred with experts in the field, and conducted a survey of three regional comparison groups.

This study comprised of an embedded mixed method design where the data for Phase I was collected from primary and secondary sources, current literature, and expert analysis of the relevant issues. In Phase II, these data were used to formulate a survey to quantify the desirability of a regional middle school. Mertens & Wilson (2012), refer to an embedded mixed method design as "a particular type of dialectical design in which one data set is collected to support the larger data set in a study, although dialogue occurs between the two sets of data as described" (p. 343). This embedded mixed method design was employed to promote the human rights and social justice imperatives of youth that continue to be marginalized by racial and economic isolation in public schools. This study synthesized social science research in order to develop and inform a *Simple Descriptive Survey* of citizens affected by the lack of diversity in the majority of middle schools in the Richmond metro region. A simple descriptive survey is most appropriate as it provides a descriptive picture of a group's opinions on targeted issues (Mertins & Willson, 2012).

As previously mentioned above, this study has been divided into two distinct phases (see also Appendix A for phases and timeline of study). The first phase of the study essentially answered the first three research questions (RQ1-RQ3). The data gathered from the first phase of the study was synthesized and used to inform and guide the development of a survey instrument to address the final research question (RQ4) of the study. The second phase of the study will be primarily quantitative in nature. Results from the survey will be utilized to examine the levels of

support for a regional school focusing on a particular school theme with an emphasis on diversity. This was be achieved by gathering and understanding participant perspectives on how a regional school should be structured, perceptions of diversity, and hurdles to regional cooperation that may prevent the creation of a regional school.

Phase I of Study

Purpose. The focus of this phase was to ascertain the most relevant issues associated with racial and socioeconomic segregation and learn the strategies currently employed by school districts across the nation to reduce racial and socioeconomic isolation and that promote diversity in public schools. Secondly, this phase provided a synthesis of existing federal and state laws and policies, which impact the creation of a regional middle school. Finally, potential funding sources—federal, state, local, or otherwise—will be analyzed as means to finance the regional middle school.

Data collection. This phase of the study drew upon a collection of primary and secondary resources with an emphasis on social science research. Scholarly articles and journals, government documents, relevant court cases, federal and state legislation and policy documents, as well as authoritative books on the topic of school segregation and diversity were examined. These resources provided historical context, a perspective on current issues and potential solutions, and the encompassing legal and political framework.

Data analysis. Qualitative research techniques such as coding and theme identification was employed to determine emergent themes arising from the various document sources, revealing the most relevant issues surrounding racial and economic isolation, and national trends on solutions that promote diversity in schools.

Finally, four case studies of school districts are presented to help illustrate commonly used voluntary school integration plans or student assignment methods that promote racial and socioeconomic diversity. These case studies were ultimately chosen because they represent a broad appeal of the various alternative approaches utilized to integrate schools. The case studies stand as models of what school districts can offer as alternatives to promote school diversity, but also illustrate the challenges presented when districts fail to plan and provide adequate resources to implement these alternatives. Each case study was formatted to profile the district's demographics, provide an overview of its integration efforts and the historical perspective leading to it, and to observe the impact of the district's integration plan had on racial and or and socioeconomic diversity.

The four case studies include: Denver Schools of Science and Technology, which uses a weighted-lottery system to admit students to its 14 STEM-based charter schools; Omaha Public Schools, which utilizes a combination of open enrollment and theme-focused magnet schools to allow students to attend their neighborhood schools or apply to magnet schools within their attendance zones; Connecticut Inter-district Magnet School Program, which uses a lottery system to admit students to inter-district magnet schools; and finally, San Francisco Unified School District, which uses open enrollment and an Educational Placement Center to assign students to the school of their choice in or outside of their attendance zone.

These case studies were gathered from the *Still Looking to the Future: Voluntary K-12 School Integration* manual, a second edition (2008) of the joint project of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund (LDF) and the Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles (CRP). That document, which was issued immediately after the Supreme Court's June 2007 decision in *Parents Involved* (2007), provides valuable guidance and information about how school districts

and communities can promote racial and socioeconomic diversity and address isolation in schools nationwide.

Phase II of Study

Purpose. The second phase of the research study represents a quantitative analysis of stakeholders' perceptions about a regional school solution and the possibility for regional cooperation. Data gathered from the first phase of the study was used to lay the foundation for the development of a survey instrument to address the final research question (RQ4) of this study: *Is there regional support to create a regional middle school?* This phase of the study focused on a simple descriptive survey of participants from three regional comparative groups. The survey was developed to elucidate the desirability for a regional middle school with a focus on diversity; specifically, it was be designed to gather perceptions of diversity, structure of a regional middle school (i.e., thematic focus), and obstacles to regional cooperation.

Survey participants. Three distinct regional groups were selected to participate in the survey. They included participants from the Looking Back, Moving Forward conference; parents from the regional localities and members of the regional Parent Teacher Association group (referred to as PTA); and participants from the Bridging Richmond Middle School Summit (referred to as Bridging Richmond). These participant groups represent various education stakeholders in and around the metro Richmond area and nationally, and provide a diverse perspective on the perceptions of what a regional school solution looks like and what obstacles may exist. These participant groups are discussed in more detail next.

Looking Back, Moving Forward participants. The first survey participation group was comprised of those who attended the regional conference titled, *Looking Back, Moving Forward: Race, Class, and School Boundaries in the Richmond Region* held in Richmond, Virginia in

March of 2013. The LBMF participants were chosen because they are considered to be advocates for, and show an interest in exploring ways to advance educational equity and excellence in Richmond metro area schools.

This group comprised of national and local researchers, educational practitioners, policy makers, community and corporate members, and students. These individuals either attended the conference or asked to be placed on the listserv to be informed about future findings and events. This is a critical stakeholder group to include, if the idea of a regional school ever has a chance of becoming a reality. The primary goal of the Looking Back, Moving Forward conference was to generate regional solutions for advancing high quality, diverse, and carefully structured learning opportunities in Richmond metro area schools. The Looking Back, Moving Forward organizers and steering committee sent the survey to their listserv on our behalf.

PTA participants. The second survey participation group was the regional PTA members. Again, this group comprised of parents who reside in each of the regional localities who are members of the Richmond District PTA, which includes PTA groups in Goochland, Henrico, Hanover, Richmond City and Powhatan. These participants were chosen because they represent parents and guardians who likely have school-age children attending schools in both suburban and urban settings, and who may have varying perspectives due to their own personal situations and experiences with public schools. Although parents in the region may or may not be aware of the educational inequities between public schools in the region, acquiring the perceptions and opinions of the PTA groups will provide a parental perspective to the research findings. The research team utilized social media (through a Facebook e-mail distribution lists) to reach parents directly and worked through and the Richmond District PTA President to reach PTA leaders and members in the different jurisdictions to disseminate the survey.

Bridging Richmond participants. The Bridging Richmond group was included because they represent a group seeking solutions for middle schools, a primary objective of this research study. Specifically, this group is comprised of regional school leaders and other stakeholders associated with the Bridging Richmond Middle School Summits held in Richmond, Virginia in July and October of 2013. The attendees included scholars, policy makers, educators, and citizens seeking solutions and best practices for addressing academic, behavioral, and social challenges at the middle school level in public schools in the region. These participants have pertinent knowledge and understanding of issues surrounding middle school students, and were more likely to offer effective solutions and best practices to improving student achievement at that level. The Bridging Richmond organizers distributed the survey to their listserv consisting of participants from the summits.

Instrument. An online survey was developed to help answer research question four: *Is there regional support to create a regional middle school?* The survey was be used to gauge the level of support, as well as perceptions of diversity, structure of a regional middle school, and obstacles to regional cooperation in the Richmond metropolitan area. The survey was administered through a Survey Monkey account owned by Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). An email with a link to the survey was sent to participants. Also included in the email was information which provided context and background to why the survey was administered.

Dissemination of survey. Initially, the survey was piloted for usability and technical dexterity. An online draft version of the survey was sent and administered to doctoral students from the Richmond metro, Fredericksburg and Longwood cohorts in the Educational Leadership program at VCU. The survey was sent to the LBMF conference organizers and the Capstone committee members. Appropriate changes were made to the survey based on feedback and

recommendations from all piloted parties. The survey was then administered to the three regional participant groups, the Looking Back, Moving Forward, Bridging Richmond, and PTA groups. All three groups participated in the survey within a designated time frame. Reminder communications (including phone calls and emails) were sent to increase the participation rate.

Survey questions and rationale. The Regional School Survey consisted of an introductory message, followed by 24 questions (see Appendix B for complete survey). The background paragraph took each participant less than two minutes to read. The survey itself was designed for participants to complete in less than seven minutes. Careful design and scrutiny was given to the introductory paragraph and the survey itself to minimize the time and difficulty of the survey completion in order to maximize the response rate. Additionally, not all questions required a response. The introductory paragraph supplied contextual and background information to the participants who had little or no knowledge about regional schools or issues associated with the lack of diversity in schools in the metro Richmond area.

The instrument itself was organized to collect opinions and demographic information from stakeholders around the region. The survey started with an introduction and was divided into four sections. Section one attempted to identify participants' perceptions of diversity. The term "diversity" can have many different interpretations. The researchers tried to ensure that the survey measured specific feelings about racial and economic diversity for the participants' own children and children in general. A rating scale was used in this section to determine the degree of importance of diversity to the participant taking the survey. The researchers were particularly interested to find out if there was a difference in people's perception when asked about a generic student and school versus their own child. The survey employed a modified Likert scale and

purposely had four answer choices instead of five to eliminate the possibility of a participant "fence sitting" or not providing a definitive opinion.

The second section of the survey examined respondents' thoughts on the type of school that interest them most. It also inquired about what level of school and what characteristics are important to a school's success. Section three measured the level of support and identified perceived obstacles in the creation of a regional school. These questions gauged how individuals in the region might be willing to support the creation of a regional school. This section also gathered information about perceived obstacles associated with the creation of a regional school. Future policymakers and interest groups (like Looking Back, Moving Forward) might benefit from knowing the perceived obstacles to a regional school to help focus their message and efforts. The final section solicited demographic information the researchers used to disaggregate the data. The researchers attempted to identify trends that emerged regarding differences in perceptions based on race, locality, and regional participant groups.

Data collection. A listserv of approximately 400 contacts were compiled by the Looking Back, Moving Forward organizers. The PTA group was comprised of approximately 264 individuals from various localities in the area. Finally, a listserv of approximately 160 participants from the Bridging Richmond was utilized. The combined sample size of all three groups was approximately 824 participants.

Data analysis. The researchers explored the relationship between participant demographics and their preferences for the thematic focus of a regional school, perceptions of the importance of diversity, and the level of support for regional cooperation. The survey instrument allowed the researchers to compare participant preferences across demographics

including locality, income, gender, educational attainment, and race. The research team tested the degree of statistical significance between different demographics and participant groups.

Assumptions and limitations. This study was conducted with the understanding of the following assumptions: the participants of the survey clearly understood the survey questions and responded honestly to the survey; individuals in the LBMF listserv had a degree of interest in school diversity and a regional education system solution; using a transformative participatory or collaborative inquiry approach, would increase the usefulness of the knowledge gained to more accurately answer the four research questions; the data collection would yield valid and complete data; and the research design and data analysis procedures for this study were appropriate.

The following limitations of the study are noted: the survey population of the study garnered 250 responses but was non-random, so the findings may not be necessarily generalized to the metro Richmond area population; survey participant perceptions were based on subjective self-reporting; and the use of an online survey instrument may have presented a technical challenge for some participants.

Despite these limitations, this survey offers significant insight into regional perspectives and perceptions of diversity, the level of support and desired structure for a regional school, and obstacles to regional cooperation. The relative size of the survey sample, which includes several regional groups and organizations, allows results to be fairly representative of the Richmond area and are insightful.

The participant groups represent a sizeable regional cross-section of teachers, administrators, central office personnel, and local policymakers. The information gained from this survey should be useful for the client, policymakers, and educational leaders who desire and seek a regional solution. The survey was an important step in laying the foundation for future

research, and outlines the criterion for creation of a regional school that values diversity within the metro Richmond area.

In the following chapter, the researchers reveal the findings for each of the four research questions. Included are more details regarding the data collection and analysis methods utilized to arrive at their results. The discussion of the findings lays the groundwork for conclusions and recommendations from the study that will be provided in chapter five.

CHAPTER IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter, the findings of the research study are reported. The study explored the possibility, feasibility, and desirability of a regional middle school for children in the Richmond metro area. A regional middle school can serve as a model to reverse the widening student opportunity and achievement gaps that are linked to racial and socioeconomic isolation many urban school divisions, including Richmond City, have experienced more recently.

This study began with a critical analysis of relevant literature, which brought to light the issues surrounding racially and socioeconomically segregated public schools. These schools, most likely found in urban metros and with high concentrations of Black and Latino/a students, often have lesser qualified teachers, inferior school facilities, and fewer academic resources than their mostly White, suburban school counterparts. Second, the literature reveals such educational inequities suffered by Blacks (and other racial minorities) are closely linked to centuries of systemic racial oppression. Next, the emphasis of the literature shifts to the legal fight for educational equality, and the acknowledgement by the high courts that segregated schools have negative consequences and that classroom diversity can produce distinctive educational benefits. Finally, the literature provides evidence that there are short and long-term benefits associated with diverse learning environments.

This chapter contains a summary of the data-collection and data analysis methods, and findings for each research question (RQ1 through RQ4). The approach utilized to investigate the study was a mixed method design. This dialectical design was sequential in nature, where one data set was collected and used to support another data set in the study. Specifically, the qualitative data collected and analyzed in Phase I of the research study was used to inform and

support the quantitative nature of Phase II. The findings of the study are organized by the research questions which are embedded within the discussion of each of the two phases. Figures, tables, and charts are provided as part of the analysis, where applicable, to help interpret data. The result from Phase I of the study is discussed first, followed by an analysis of results for Phase II.

Phase I Results

The first phase of the study explored the possibility and feasibility parameters of a regional middle school solution. The researchers utilized a synthesis of pertinent research, assessed data from primary and secondary sources, and consulted with experts in the field. Data collection and analysis for this phase was continuous and ongoing for several months, from June 2013 to January 2014. This phase addresses RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3.

Research Question 1

> (RQ1) What are the national trends in and solutions to addressing issues of racial and economic isolation?

Data-collection Method: Documentation Review

Data collected for this research question began with information gathered from the literature review process, as well as data from the literature itself. The literature provided context and historical facts to better inform the researchers of primary and periphery topics, and was a rich source of references on organizations and individuals that were knowledgeable and experts on the topics of school segregation, racial and socioeconomic isolation, school diversity, and voluntary school integration. A myriad of online-sourced and hard-copy artifacts and documents were used, including relevant federal, state, and local government documents and websites. Additionally, various schools and school division websites, news articles, research manuscripts and journals, authoritative books, and other education information sourced from government-

funded organizations and foundations were utilized. Lastly, informal interviews were conducted, where possible, with individuals in schools or with organizations that could provide additional insight based on their personal experiences related to the research question topic.

Data-analysis Method: Document Analysis

The collected data were used to apprise the researchers on historical aspects of school segregation, racial and socioeconomic isolation, and voluntary school and school division integration methods and assignment plans. A content analysis was performed on these data to determine emergent themes. The themes which arose from the analysis of the data, as it pertains to RQ1, are common methods used by U.S. schools and school divisions to promote school integration in the K-12 setting.

Findings Related to Research Question 1 (Phase I)

Alternative school integration approaches outlined here represent national student assignment trends used to promote diversity and avoid racial isolation. Based on the data collected for this research question, two documents have surfaced as the most authoritative on ways to legally and creatively achieve diversity and avoid racial resegregation. The first, *Still Looking to the Future: Voluntary K-12 School Integration* (Bhargava et al., 2008)—referred to hereafter as the K-12 School Integration manual—is a second edition manual for parents, educators and advocates that provide guidance on what can be done to promote diversity and avoid racial isolation in schools. The second document, "Guidance on The Voluntary Use of Race to Achieve Diversity and to Avoid Racial Isolation in Elementary and Secondary Schools" ("Guidance on the," 2011), is a collectively issued a guidance document by the United States Department of Justice and United States Department of Education (DOJ & DOE) on how elementary and secondary schools can voluntarily and legally achieve diversity and avoid racial

isolation. Both documents compile a robust and commanding perspective on topics that surround current voluntary school integration trends, and help schools, parents and advocates navigate the maze of legal, political, and policy issues.

The voluntary school assignment methods outlined in both documents are summarized and presented next. They are considered legally viable options according to the Supreme Court ruling in the *Parents Involved* (2007) case—one that represented a critical juncture in the fight to avoid racial resegregation in schools. Following the school assignment methods overview, is an examination of four case studies which help to better illustrate the use and implementation of student assignment approaches used by large school districts to promote racial integration.

Alternative Approaches to School Integration

The DOJ and DOE indicate that integration approaches to achieve diversity or avoid racial isolation generally fall into two categories: those that do not rely on the race of individual students, and those that do ("Guidance on the," 2011). Moreover, the K-12 School Integration manual further breaks down and classifies integration approaches as *Category I, II,* and *II* methods. Category I and II methods are those that do not rely on the race of an individual student, while Category III methods do take into account individual student characteristics. What follows, is a summary of methods within each category as outlined in K-12 School Integration manual.

Category I methods are considered permissible "race-conscious" approaches that were explicitly recognized by the Supreme Court. These integration methods are not mutually exclusive and may work more effectively when used in combination with another:

1. *Drawing and adjusting of school attendance boundaries:* Although many public school systems use traditional mandatory student assignment to 'neighborhood' or 'community'

schools, assigning students to a school within their geographic proximity in communities where racially segregated housing patterns exists, can result in racial isolation. Encouraging school officials to consider student demographics when redrawing attendance boundaries will help promote racial diversity where school systems use this type of mandatory assignment.

2. *Placement of new schools:* School divisions can attempt to strategically place new schools in locations that are likely to create a racially or socioeconomically diverse school. The best case scenario will yield long-term community development efforts that encourage racial and socioeconomic integration with the right combination of housing and school planning.

3. *Strategic use of special programs:* Districts may create special programs at a school which might attract a racially diverse group of students. Some well-known examples of this are school district funded International Baccalaureate (IB) and Advanced Placement (AP) programs, or the government funded Magnet School Assistance Program (MSAP).

4. *Targeted recruitment of students and faculty:* A school or school district may target recruitment and outreach to particular racial groups. For example, to attract White students, information sessions may be held in predominantly White neighborhoods, or incentives for Black or Asian teachers may be provided in an effort to diversify a school's faculty. Additionally, other recruitment tools may be employed such as open houses, partnerships with community or civic centers, door-to-door outreach, and leaflets may be used to attract a broad range of students.

5. *Tracking enrollment, performance and other statistics by race:* Schools divisions may collect and use student enrollment, performance, discipline and other data to identify

schools in need of improvement. This information will be useful in combating the harms of racial isolation and to promote diversity.

Category II methods, while not explicitly endorsed by the Supreme Court, are race-conscious approaches similar to Category I methods because they do not account for the race of an individual student. As such, these alternatives should not raise legal concerns. Category II methods include, but are not limited to:

1. *Renovating and expanding existing schools:* School divisions may allocate or apply for construction funds to renovate and expand existing schools in a way that would attract or sustain a more diverse student population; this is similar to placing a special program at an exciting school.
2. *School pairing/Grade realignment:* School divisions may choose to create racial diversity by merging two adjacent schools, as well as their attendance zones, that have different racial compositions. For example, two neighboring K-6 schools with different racial compositions may be realigned to serve students in Grades K-3 and 4-6, respectively, to create racial diversity at each school.
3. *Multi-district consolidation:* There may be an opportunity for regional cooperation between several different school systems to create a single, larger district with a more racially diverse student population. Consolidation of two or more adjacent divisions with disparate racial demographics can do more to promote integration than any single district's policy.

Because Category III methods generally take into account individual student characteristics, the DOJ and DOE advocate that school divisions should first determine if race-neutral approaches would be unworkable to achieve a compelling interest before relying on

individual racial classifications. If a school district decides that the use of individual racial classification is warranted, they should carefully consider as to when and how an individual student's race is used. More specifically, as the DOJ's and DOE's guidance suggests, an individual student's race should be, at a minimum, one of many components:

1. *Student assignment to special programs:* In addition to extensive outreach to attract a diverse pool of applicants, school divisions operating special programs or magnet schools may consider a student's' race as one of many factors to admit students. This assignment plan is a form of limited school choice. Other factors that may be considered as part of the admission criteria include, but are not limited to, the student's neighborhood and prior academic performance, parental education or the student's family income level.
2. *Student transfers:* This student assignment plan is another form of limited school choice, and where school divisions have established voluntary transfer plans designed to promote integration and/or reduce racial isolation. Effectively executed transfer plans contribute to diversity without having students attend schools they do not desire to attend, and minimizes racial segregation effects at the school the student would be attending and/or would be leaving.
3. *Inter-district transfer programs:* When solutions are limited within a school district's boundary to promote racial integration—particularly when the student population in that district is overwhelmingly White or students of color-—the need to team with its neighboring school district to achieve integration may be warranted. This may be achieved through a voluntary inter-district transfer program. A common example is the pairing of an urban school district with one or more of its suburban counterparts.

4. *Statewide Open Enrollment Laws:* Many states in the U.S. have some form of open enrollment legislation, which provides students more choices among the public schools offered within their state. Two main forms of open enrollment policies exist—intra-district (where students attend schools within their district boundaries) and inter-district (where students cross district boundaries). Open enrollment laws in some states permit school systems to voluntarily choose to adopt either policy, while some states require school districts to allow students to choose a school to attend, whether within or outside their district.

These alternatives, by no means represent a final, exhaustive list of options, but rather represent approaches that are legally viable after the Supreme Court's ruling. Justice Kennedy voiced the call to action and encouraged our "experts, parents, administrators, and other concerned citizens to find a way to achieve the compelling interest" to avoid racial and ethnic isolation and promote diversity in schools. The most successful volunteer integration plans will likely be those that account for the unique historical, political, geographic, and demographic character of a particular community for which they are designed (Bhargava et al., 2008).

Case Studies

In this section, four case studies are presented which characterize commonly used voluntary school integration plans or student assignment methods that school districts have used to avoid racial isolation and promote racial diversity. The first three case studies serve as viable models for the type of regional cooperation needed among school districts, student assignment plans, and suitable school structures and designs that can make the creation of a regional middle school in metro Richmond possible. The final case study, however, is an illustration of the challenges and obstacles that may exists for a school district seeking to avoid racial isolation, but

lacks a diverse student body and critical funding to effectively implement a student diversity assignment plan.

Case Study 1: Denver Schools of Science and Technology (Public Charter Schools) Category I & III: Strategic use of Special Programs; Statewide Open Enrollment Policy

Total Number of Schools (Charter Schools): 204 (8)
Total Students in Denver Public Schools: 87,398
Annual District Growth Rate: 3% *Approximate*
Asian/Pacific Islander: 5.0% (4,370)
Black, Non-Hispanic: 14.1% (12,322)
Hispanic: 57.5% (50,251)
White, Non-Hispanic: 20.3% (17,441)
Native American: 0.5% (437)
Multi-racial: 4.7% (4,107)
Free/Reduced Price Lunch: 65.2% (56,980)
(Data based on 2013-2014 enrollment)

Overview

The Denver School of Science and Technology (DSST) was founded in 2004 as a public charter school. The DSST initiative currently has eight schools across the City of Denver. By 2022, a total of 14 school campuses are planned, seven middle schools and seven high schools. It strives to attain 100% of the state standards for all of its students. Starting with grade 6, it gives a greater probability of success according to its educational program standards.

DSST schools has a college preparatory curriculum that focuses on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) in their curriculum. It stresses project-based learning within the STEM curriculum. The school curriculum does not have a specific curricular focus on diversity. The parameters of the lottery system does place an emphasis on socioeconomic and geographic diversity by setting quotas on the number of students receiving free and reduced lunch and the number of students that reside within certain geographic boundaries.

History of Integration Efforts

Denver Public Schools has a long history of integration efforts. It was the first northern school district to be ordered by the United States Supreme Court to desegregate minority students. The 1973 ruling, *Keyes v Denver School District No.1* was the first ruling to recognize Latina/o students as part of the minority group that was protected from segregation. Early desegregation efforts were helped by annexing surrounding areas of metropolitan Denver that were becoming increasingly White suburban areas. Desegregation eroded due to local legislation that prevented further annexation and a minority - particularly Latina/o - population grew. In 1995, the court ended nearly 20 years of mandated segregation. In a city that was becoming increasingly Latina/o and increasingly segregated, school desegregation efforts proved to be difficult. By the 2003-2004 school year, a significant portion of Denver schools was at least 80% minority and 50% socioeconomic deprivation. Recent efforts, like the Denver Schools of Science and Technology initiative, are attempting to reverse those trends.

Admissions Policy

There are no admissions requirements. Students apply through a lottery system. For the 2012-2013 school year, 3,800 students applied for admission and approximately 800 were admitted. By having a lottery admissions system, DSST is able to achieve an economic and demographic make-up that more closely mirrors the district as a whole and not necessarily the neighborhood in which it is geographically located . Unlike magnet schools or private options, students' academic, discipline, and special education record are not factored into the admissions process. There are caveats to the lottery for each individual school. The selection committee can impose certain

stipulations to ensure favored access to certain demographics. For example, the lottery caveats for the DSST Byers Middle school states:

> Lottery preferences: 50% of all students must qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch, 30% of students from anywhere in Denver, 70% of students who live in the neighborhood enrollment zone for the following elementary schools (must live within neighborhood boundaries for these schools).

Taking into account the socioeconomic level of the neighborhood elementary schools, the selection committee can give preferences to ensure the level of socioeconomic diversity. These preferences vary by school. Furthermore, students from outside the Denver Public School system are allowed to apply. The school choice regulations in Colorado allow for cross district enrollment.

Impact on Diversity

This type of weighted lottery system impacts diversity in several ways. By placing these schools in economically challenged areas and mandating that a certain percentage of students come from within a school's traditional boundary, it allows a portion of those students to automatically attend that school. The school's thematic focus makes it attractive to students who come from areas that are more affluent. By weighting the lottery it creates a geographically diverse population. Unlike a specialty center set within an existing school, the entire school is a science and technology charter. This way, it does not create a school within a school that does nothing to promote a diverse learning experience.

Students at DSST outperformed their counterparts on the district and state assessments in reading and math according to *US News and World Report* (2011). The

school's impact on disadvantaged students is even more impressive. The percentage of disadvantaged students scoring proficiency on state measures was 32% higher than the state average for disadvantaged students. While these schools only serve a small percentage of students in the Denver Public School system, they maintain a racially and economically diverse student body that achieves higher academically than their district and state peers. This is shown through a 100% college acceptance rate with the last six graduating classes ("DSST public schools," 2014).

Case Study 2: Omaha Public Schools, Nebraska
Category I & II: Strategic use of Special Programs; Multi-District Consolidation; & Open Enrollment

Total Number of Schools: 102 (*includes Regional Magnet Schools)*
Total Student Population (K-12): 51,070
Annual District Growth Rate: 1.2%
Pacific Islander: 0.1 % (73)
American Indian: 1.1 % (550)
Asian American: 4.0 % (2,038)
Multiracial: 5.4 % (2,779)
Black, Non-Hispanic Students: 25.7% (13,102)
White, Non-Hispanic Students: 31.4% (16,031)
Hispanic Students: 32.3% (16,497)
Free/Reduced Lunch: 73.6% (37,588)
(Data based on 2013-2014 enrollment)

Overview

Omaha Public Schools district (OPS) joined with 11 other school districts to form a metropolitan-wide learning community in 2007. In OPS, the student assignment plan driving socioeconomic diversity is regional and allows students to attend their neighborhood schools or apply to magnet schools within their attendance zones. Students may also attend schools outside their zones through an open enrollment process, as long as space is available. The magnet schools focus on such areas as visual and performing arts, math and technology.

History of Integration Efforts

While Jim Crow laws did not mandate segregated education in the North as was the case in the South, housing patterns and numerous decisions by policymakers nevertheless brought about de facto segregation to districts like Omaha Public Schools. African American parents in Omaha, realizing their children were not receiving an equal education, decided to take legal action against OPS in hopes of having a more integrated educational system. Thus, in 1976, the courts intervened to assist in the desegregation of OPS, and a federal court order mandated busing, essentially integrating the district in the 1970's.

Omaha Public Schools ended court-ordered busing in 1996, and in 1997 the School Board authorized the superintendent to establish a taskforce to examine other ways to promote racial (and other) diversity in Omaha schools. In 1997, a new Student Assignment Plan was authorized for implementation; it relied on a combination of neighborhood assignments, parental choice, and a variety of magnet schools. The current student assignment plan, passed in 2009, allowed OPS to join 11 other school districts in the metropolitan area to form the Learning Community.

The Learning Community represents a regional cooperation between 11 local school districts, all with a common vision to reduce the achievement gap by improving academic outcomes and ensuring equal access to educational opportunity for children and families in poverty. The Learning Community is run by an 18 member governing body comprising of six subcouncil districts, each with an appointed school board member and two elected representatives. The 11-district cooperative is funded through a tax on property in the participating counties.

Student Assignment Policy

The OPS school integration assignment plan represents a multidistrict consolidation under the Category II method of student assignment plans. Omaha Public Schools joined with eleven surrounding school districts in Douglas and Sarpy Counties to form a metropolitan-wide learning community in 2007. These learning communities are centered around magnet schools that specialize in visual and performing arts, math and technology. The plan also accounts for a student's free or reduced lunch (FRL) status to promote socioeconomic diversity at each of the eleven learning communities. The goal of this "race-neutral" integration plan is two-fold; to increase socioeconomic diversity and decrease the academic achievement gap.

The challenges of this plan were numerous, from development and management of the political structure that would govern the 11 different learning communities to operational aspects such as open enrollment, transportation, and funding once the learning communities were established. The success of the learning communities over the last few years has brought on a more recent challenge: to help the 11 member school districts align with the new Learning Community Diversity Plan, which is that every school would have 38 % of their students eligible for a free or reduced lunch.

The Learning Community is in its fifth year of operation, with a 1.45 % yearly increase in general student enrollment, and a one-half percent increase in FRL students. It has expanded academic and family support programs, particularly at the elementary school level. Plans are currently underway to build a $4.6 million learning center that will serve as the headquarters for the Learning Community and a testing ground for programs

aimed at raising the academic achievement of children living in poverty and facing language barriers.

Impact on Diversity

Since joining the Learning Community in 2007, OPS has gone from a White majority to a majority-minority school district. Over that period, Whites fell 9.6 percentage points overall to 31.4 percent. Likewise, the Black (non-Hispanic) population declined as well, but still make up 25.7 % overall. The largest jump in racial group population was experienced by Hispanics, increasing 8.4 points to 32.3 % overall. Now, Black, Hispanics, and other racial groups combine to eclipse White students across the district. Also during the same time, the overall FRL percentage increased 11.6 points to 73.6 % overall.

Within the Learning Community, however, diversity goals have not quite taken hold. One of the primary goals of the Learning Community is to improve the academic performance of students who live in poverty. This is to be achieved by reducing the "achievement gap" between students who receive FRL, and by ensuring an equal distribution of FRL students among the schools within the Learning Community. So far, this goal has not been met. The goal of having 38 % of students who receive FRL throughout the schools in the six subcouncils in Learning Community has been difficult to achieve. As of the 2012-2013 school year, the percentage of students who qualify for FRL varied greatly among the six subcouncils, from 18% and 17%, respectively, in Subcouncils 4 and 6, to nearly 81% in Subcouncil 2; and above 44% in Subcouncils 1, 3, and 5, which is also the FRL percentage for the entire Learning Community.

Leaders of the Learning Community believe the inability to achieve the desired socioeconomic diversity has hampered efforts to reduce the achievement gap for FRL students. A three year comparison (2011 to 2013) of Learning Community and State proficiency results in Reading and Math on the Nebraska State Accountability (NeSA) tests shows minimal difference in the "Performance Gap" (difference between results of student receiving FRL and non-FRL students). During that period, the performance gap in Reading for the Learning Community was 3 to 4 percent over State results for each of the grades levels 3-5, 6-8, and 11. And, the gap between the performance for non-FRL and FRL groups in 2013 was greater in the Learning Community than in the state in the same three grade levels.

Due to the inability of the Learning Community to produce more immediate results in terms of diversity and closing the achievement gap, some Omaha state legislature representatives have made attempts to dissolve it. Proponents in the legislature argue that more time is needed because the Learning Community is still in the process of being fully implemented. Initial concerns which have been raised may provide some insight; first, the Omaha's plan offers little oversight or sanctions for districts not meeting Learning Community expectations; second, the law lacks specified targets and timelines, and provides no recourse for districts that do not meet diversity goals; and finally, the law focuses on socioeconomic diversity (and no specific race targets) as a means to increase racial diversity.

Connecticut Inter-district Magnet Schools
Category II: Multi-District Consolidation and Magnet Schools

Total Number of Schools: 72
Total Student Population: 32,709
African American/Black: 31.44% (10,284)
Asian American: 4.10% (1,341)
Pacific Islander Students: 0.00 %
Hispanic Students: 30.31% (9,914)
American Indian: 0.12% (39)
White: 30.56% (9,996)
Two or More Races: 2.85% (932)
Free/Reduced Price Lunch: 55.83% (18,261)
(Data from 2012-2013 school year)

Overview

The Connecticut Inter-district Magnet Schools (CIMS) is intended to enhance the academic and social development of students. It is designed to improve academic achievement by bringing together students and teachers with similar interests to experience specialized, thematic curricula, which are designed to propel student engagement and academic aspirations. Magnet schools also enrich the social development of students by providing diverse learning environments. These environments are meant to heighten multicultural understandings and broaden worldviews, which help students develop the skills and orientations to successfully engage in a diverse society.

History of Integration Efforts

In a 1996 ruling, the Connecticut Supreme Court held that as a result of racial, ethnic, and economic isolation, Hartford public school students were denied equal educational opportunity under the state constitution. In keeping with the mandate of *Sheff v. O'Neill*, the state adopted a number of programs designed to provide students in the state's central cities, particularly Hartford, New Haven, and Waterbury, with

opportunities to attend schools with students from suburban districts. The most significant response from the state was its effort to support the establishment and operation of inter-district magnet schools. The express goal of inter-district magnet schools was to diminish racial and economic isolation while offering attractive and engaging curricula that bolsters educational improvement.

Student Assignment Policy

The inter-district magnet school program in Connecticut is a model of choice-based desegregation, which invites students to attend less racially and economically isolated schools. Involvement in the program is entirely voluntary; neither families nor districts are required to participate. Furthermore, student race is not used as a determinant for admission to any inter-district magnet school. A lottery system is employed. However, a sibling of a student attending a CIMS receives priority status, if he/she applies to the same school. The administration will attempt to provide a slot for that applicant. Additionally, the percentage of free and reduced lunch eligible students in inter-district magnet schools attended by central city students of color is much lower than the percentages in the central city district schools.

This model is designed to integrate students across district lines, which is crucial for achieving significant levels of racial integration. Yet, reliance on voluntary choice to promote integration allows Connecticut's inter-district magnets to provide only a limited number of students in Connecticut's central cities with access to diverse schools.

Impact on Diversity

Inter-district magnet schools provide students of color from Connecticut's most isolated central cities with an opportunity to attend racially and economically diverse

schools. In Hartford and New Haven, the percentage of White students attending a predominantly Black school is below 10%. On the other hand, students of color who enroll in inter-district magnet schools experience more integrated environments than minority students in central city district schools. Black and Hispanic magnet school students who reside in Hartford, New Haven, or Waterbury attend schools with a considerably higher percentage of white students and a lower percentage of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch. Likewise, students from Connecticut suburbs who attend inter-district magnet school experience more diverse learning environments with higher percentages of minority and free-lunch-eligible students.

The specialized curricula along with the diverse learning environments of inter-district magnet schools improve the chances for students to succeed in a global community. Diverse learning environments promote collaboration and communication across cultures and disciplines. The interaction between students of different economic backgrounds within an educational setting, elicits mutual understanding and respect. In addition, the measures of academic achievement are higher for students of color at inter-district magnet schools compared to their counterparts in central city district schools.

The effects of inter-district magnet schools on student achievement indicate that attendance at an inter-district magnet high school has positive effects on the mathematics and reading achievement of central city students and that inter-district magnet middle schools have positive effects on reading achievement. Inter-district magnet schools, on average, succeed in providing students with more enhanced diverse learning opportunities within an environment of higher-achieving peers. They represent a

promising model for helping to address educational and social emotional ills encountered in racially and economically isolated schools.

Case Study 4: San Francisco Unified School District
Category I: Open Enrollment

Total Number of Schools: 131
Total Students: 54,200
Asian/Pacific Islander Students: 40% (20,960)
Black, Non-Hispanic Students: 9% (4,878)
Hispanic Students: 25% (13,550)
White, Non-Hispanic Students: 13% (7,046)
Other: 13% (7,046)
Free/Reduced Price Lunch: 62.1% (33,658)
(Data based on 2012-2013 Enrollment)

Overview

Students in the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) are able to apply to attend the school of their choice. SFUSD uses an Educational Placement Center to assign students to schools considering not only student choice, but also geography, school capacity, and ethnicity. San Francisco Unified School District has 10 academic goals. They include increasing the achievement of all of their students, increasing the enrollment in honors courses, specifically students of all races and ethnicities. Additional goals include increasing attendance, and hiring qualified, diverse teachers. Although several of the goals mention increasing the number of students of all races and ethnicities taking AP courses and exams, and reducing the over-representation of some races or ethnicities in special education. None of these academic goals are specific to increasing school diversity.

History of Integration Efforts

In 1978, the NAACP filed a suit against the state of California arguing that the San Francisco Unified School District engaged in discriminatory practices and

maintained a segregated school system. In 1983, the two parties came to an agreement known as the "Consent Decree." This was meant to accelerate the academic achievement of all students with a focus on African American and Latina/o students and to eliminate racial and ethnic segregation. In 1994, parents sued SFUSD for using race and ethnicity to determine student placement. The SFUSD proposed a lottery system but this plan was rejected by the courts. In 2001, the courts did approve a program called the "Diversity Index." This was implemented in 2002-2003. Though the court-regulated Consent Decree expired in 2005, it was used until 2011 when the current system was implemented.

Student Assignment Policy

The student assignment policy allows students to apply to the school of their choice. Families are able to request their top school choices, regardless if they live in that attendance zone. During the 2012-2013 school year, 56,967 students applied for enrollment in SFUSD. Eighty percent of these k-12 applicants received one of their first choices. The major goals of the enrollment program are to provide all students with equitable access to a number of opportunities and to end the trend of racially isolated students attending the same school that also has a high concentration of underserved students. Unfortunately, for this system to be effective, the applicant pool to attend the racially isolated schools must be diverse. This has not been the case, especially at the elementary level.

Many of the schools have fewer seats available than requests. Sometimes, even within the attendance zone there are more requests to attend a school than available space. A "tie-breaker" may be used when this occurs. First seats always go to students living in the attendance zone. Additional consideration is given to students who live in an

area that has low test scores, students with siblings at a school that they are applying to, and students in a transition year—that is, moving from elementary to middle or middle to high school. One of the major challenges for the SFUSD is the lack of transportation. In fact, budget cuts have reduced transportation to only 25 buses to serve the entire district in 2013. This number is only expected to decline in the coming years. Students can apply to schools out of their attendance zones. If enrolled, they must find their own transportation. Students attending school within their attendance zone may also not have access to school bus transportation to and from school.

Impact on Diversity

Several areas of the school division have a concentrated population of one race or ethnicity. The population within these schools reflects the neighborhood population. Many students with similar racial and ethnic backgrounds living outside of this area, given the opportunity to apply to these schools, do so. These schools become even less diverse as students transfer to schools with a similar population. Many schools lack diverse applicant pools and remain racially isolated. In fact, there are more schools with high concentrations of a single racial or ethnic group since the new system was implemented. Even with 51% of applicants applying to schools outside of their immediate attendance zone, there is still a significant achievement gap for African American, Latina/o, and Samoan students. There is not enough evidence to suggest that this gap is closing at this time under the current system. The current belief is that the student assignment system is an important component to end the trend of racial isolation in SFUSD schools. However, the current system alone will not solve the problem. The

demographics of the city, student school choice requests, and language barriers all contribute to the racial diversity or lack thereof in SFUSD schools.

Research Questions 2 & 3

(RQ2) What federal, state, and/or local legislation impacts the creation of a regional middle school?

(RQ3) What are the potential funding sources for creating a regional middle school?

Data-collection Method: Documentation Review & Interviews

Data collected to answer RQ2 and RQ3 was primarily gathered from a mix of federal, Virginia State, and Richmond area documents and reports on education policy and funding, both in electronic and hard copy formats. Internet web searches include, and information was gathered from, the U.S. Department of Education (including the Office of Civil Rights), Virginia Department of Education, Richmond metro area school divisions, and college and university websites. An exhaustive internet search for historical and current news articles and commentary related to Virginia laws, education legislation and funding, and on local school board policy were performed. Finally, interviews were conducted with local school division administrators and leaders, and with school officials from other states with knowledge on charter, magnet, and private schools.

Data-analysis Method: Document Analysis

A content analysis was performed on the data gathered to draw out emergent themes and information that would help the researchers better understand how federal, state, and/or local education policies have paved the way for the various public school options offered in Virginia. Themes which emerged identify the legal framework and potential sources of funding, and reveal

the optimal school structure and design to create a regional middle school in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Findings Related to Research Questions 2 & 3 (Phase I)

The relationship that exists between education policy and school funding warrants a discussion of results for RQ2 and RQ3 together. Examples that illustrated this close bond include: federal legislation that generates and directs government funds to support mandated education programs at state and local levels; state laws that formulate student per-pupil funding required to support public schools; and development of local school board policies and budgets which signal the importance of one educational program over another. These examples not only demonstrate the connectedness of education legislation and school funding, they also represent the entanglement between federal, state, and local governments as they attempt to meet the needs of public education.

This section of results attempts to untangle some of the layers to education policy and funding in the context of the creation of a regional middle school in and for the Richmond area. RQ2 requires an examination of federal, state, and/or local legislation impacting the creation of a regional middle school, while RQ3 investigates potential funding sources that may be available to achieve this goal.

To effectively answer both research questions, this section will introduce leading public school choice options available in Virginia as a result of federal, state or local education policies. A discussion of each school option, where applicable, entails: (1) providing a general description and brief history; (2) identifying the relevant law or legislation; (3) providing examples to help illustrate their effectiveness on student achievement and/or promoting diversity; (4) a discussion

of how each option is or can be implemented in Virginia; and (5) listing potential funding sources that currently exists to support them.

School Choice in Virginia

School choices for parents and their children vary by state, depending on a state's application of federal policies and the convergence of state and local laws. The enactment and implementation of federal, state and local legislation and funding initiatives has provided a framework for public school choices at the state and local levels. This section of the paper focuses on school choice options offered in Virginia. For the purposes of this discussion (and hereafter), the term "school choice" will be defined as school alternatives for parents and their children other than their assigned neighborhood public school. It can mean choosing a school within a school division's boundary or across school divisions; and it can be a choice within public schools or between public and private schools.

In the Commonwealth of Virginia, nationally recognized and publically funded school choice options include open enrollment assignment plans, and charter and magnets schools. Other school choice options offered for parents and their children in Virginia include private schools, Governor's Schools, and college partnership laboratory schools. Some of these options enjoy federal support while others are only available and supported through state and local means. Together, these school choice options may impact, in one way or another, the creation of a regional middle school in the Richmond metro area.

Open Enrollment Programs/Policies

There are two types of open enrollment policies which are used by school districts, intra- and inter-district policies (Tefera, Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, & Chirichigno, 2011). Intra-district open enrollment polices allow students to transfer to another school within a students'

own school district, while inter-district open enrollment policies allow students to transfer to another school across district lines. Because of the nature of an intra-district open enrollment program, it would not be a viable solution (or part of a solution) for a regional middle school. Therefore, the conversation in this section will focus primarily on inter-district enrollment policies.

Inter-district policies. Unlike intra-district public enrollment programs, inter-district programs have not been carried out on a wide scale basis (Finnigan & Stewart, 2009). Historically, this type of program has been used to stem the effects of racial segregation and promote integration across district boundaries. In the U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Milliken v. Bradley (1974)*, de facto segregation—unintended racial separation resulting from private choices made by individuals—was not in the realm of judicial scrutiny, and "the amount of inter-district racial segregation has increased substantially" since then (Greene et al., 2010, p.10).

Urban school districts have taken the brunt of inter-district segregation, and to make matters worse, they face extreme challenges including high dropout rates and low achievement (Finnigan & Stewart, 2009). Given these circumstances, school choice advocates have brought more attention to the need for increased inter-district choices. As of 2010, the number of students participating in inter-district transfer programs is estimated at 500,000, representing about one percent of the public-school population. Only a handful of locales, including school districts in New York, Massachusetts, Missouri, California, Connecticut, Indiana, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Nebraska, have fostered racial integration by participating in inter-district choice programs (Finnigan et al., 2009; Greene et al., 2010).

Virginia and inter-district policies. Virginia is one state which has not enacted inter-district open enrollment policies to better facilitate public school choice ("School choice in,"

2014). As noted earlier, inter-division policies allow a student to transfer to a school outside his or her school division, but often require both the sending and receiving division to agree to participate. Because no mandatory policies exist in Virginia, agreements between metro area school divisions would have to be voluntary. And, in the Richmond metropolitan area—to alleviate segregation across division lines in urban schools such as in Richmond and Petersburg—would require an urban-to-suburban type of transfer agreement with surrounding county districts. This type of policy could be used in conjunction with a regional school, but would require a focus on diversity and include provisions for transportation for underserved students to effectively address racial and socioeconomic isolation.

One example demonstrates how enacting open enrollment policies without civil right protections or integration goals in will in fact increase segregation. In Minnesota, a recently released study conducted by University of Minnesota raises questions about the fairness of Minnesota's inter-district open enrollment policy; the study shows that the practice of letting students (of White families) leave diverse schools enroll in (affluent, suburban White) districts outside of where they live is leading to more racial segregation in the Twin Cities metro (Julie, 2013). Critics blame this segregation on the lack of knowledge for poor families about the open enrollment process and lack of transportation services.

Funding sources. Inter-district and intra-district public school open enrollment programs have been expanded and financially supported under NCLB, most notably as the Voluntary Public School Choice (VPSC) program, which began in 2002. Functioning independently from the choice provisions in Title I of NCLB, the VPSC provides five-year competitive grant funds to a relatively small number of sites across the country (Yin, Ahonen & Kim, 2008). This legislation gives top funding priority to programs that meet four key priorities: 1) providing the

greatest choice to students in participating schools; 2) encouraging transfers of students from low- to higher-performing schools; 3) forming inter-district partnerships to allow students to transfer to a school in another district; and 4) requiring sites to use a percentage of the funds to support transportation services, or the cost of transportation, to and from the public elementary, secondary, or charter schools, which the students choose to attend under the program (Yin et al, 2008).

A grantee may not use funds for school construction, and no more than 5% of the funds made available may be used for administrative expenses for any fiscal year. The first grants, awarded in 2002, were given to 13 applicants and awards ranged from $2.8 million to $17.8 million for an average award of $9.2 million for five years, or approximately $1.8 million per year (Yin et al, 2008). In a final evaluation monitoring the program's effectiveness during the 2002-2007 evaluation period, it was determined that the program made progress on the first priority in providing the widest variety of choice, but that most of the VPSC sites limited their choice initiatives to within-district options, rather than developing inter-district options (Yin et al., 2008).

Charter Schools

Charter schools are one of the earliest forms of school choice, and represent an example of the intersection between federal, state, and local education policy. They are independent public schools operating freely from many state and local rules and regulations which typically apply to traditional schools. Charter schools allow parents, educational entrepreneurs, and communities to innovatively provide students increased educational opportunity. Similar to public schools, however, charter schools are nonsectarian, open to all students, tuition-free, and subject to state and federal accountability standards (Lazarin, 2011; "School choice for," 2014).

Minnesota authorized the first charter in 1989, opening the first charter school at City Academy High School in St. Paul in 1992 (Ryan, 2010; Greene, Loveless, Macleod, Nechyba, Peterson, and Rosenthal Greene, 2010). Soon after, the state of California followed suit. Charter schools have had enduring bipartisan and U.S. Department of Education support. This political harmony led to the creation of the Charter Schools Program (CSP) in 1994 as an amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) under the Clinton administration. The program was designed to support the startup of new public charter schools. In 1998, the program was amended in the "Charter Schools Expansion Act" under the Bush administration and was widely supported in both houses of Congress (Lazarin, 2011).

Charter school enrollment is often smaller than traditional public schools and the pedagogical identity among them tend to vary (Ryan, 2010). Many offer different curricula, focus on a particular field of study, or target a special student population. Charters also take many other forms including single sex schools, schools for science and technology, schools for performing arts, bilingual schools, schools for drop-outs, schools for the disabled, and virtual schools (Greene et al., 2010). Green et al. (2010) argues the best known and successful charter schools include, Knowledge is Power (KIPP), the Seed School, and Uncommon Schools, all of which have instituted highly structured routines with uniforms and high student expectations.

Although charter schools have gradually acquired a growing acceptance, there has been mixed results regarding their impact on student achievement and a disturbing trend toward racial and socioeconomic segregation (Phillips, Hausman, & Larsen, 2009). Assessing the academic performance of charter schools is difficult, Phillips et al. (2009) point out, because studies of charter schools have yielded varying results, and that understanding the context and the type of charter program is important. In a synthesis of research on charter school academic performance,

Phillips et al. (2009) indicate that charter school participation is particularly effective for students in lower grades, while others suggest that charter schools are more effective in raising achievement only after several years of enrollment.

A 2010 report published by the Civil Rights Project, *Choice without Equity: Charter School Legislation and the need for Civil Rights Standards*, points to a serious lack of basic civil rights policy in state charter legislation. The report documents patterns of charter school segregation over several years and includes an analysis of 40 states and the District of Columbia. It concludes that charter schools attract a higher percentage of Black students, mostly because they tend to be located in urban metros. Nationally, 70% of black students in charter schools attend intensely segregated minority charter schools. Some charter schools enrolled populations where 99% of students were from under-represented minority backgrounds and 43% of Black charter school students attended extremely segregated minority schools—three times as high as Blacks in traditional publics schools (Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, and Wang, 2010).

Today, 42 states and Washington, D.C., have some form of charter school laws. This represents over 6,000 charter schools, over two million students, and roughly 2.6% of the public school population (Greene et al., 2010; "The abcs of," 2013). The Obama administration is encouraging charter schools to take on a more substantive role in turning around persistently underperforming traditional public schools. This paradigm shift changes the relationship between charter and traditional public schools from operating independently to partnering together. Under the federal School Improvement Grant program, one of the four turnaround options available to low-performing schools is the takeover of management by a charter school. Larger school districts across the nation are leading the way on this effort including the school districts in Washington, D.C., Detroit, and Philadelphia (Lazarin, 2010).

Virginia and charter schools. Virginia has one of the most restrictive charter school laws in the country, allowing all charter power to rest solely with the local school boards ("Measuring up to," 2013). Virginia House Bill 1390 and Senate Bill 737 call for all charter applications to be initially reviewed by the state Board of Education to determine if the application meets approval criteria. Updates to this legislation in 2013, provide some leeway to divisions creating charter schools on their own. Charter schools initiated by local school boards within their own division, do not have to submit an application to the state Board of Education. Only individuals or organizations outside a local school division would have to seek approval. As Harris (2007) explains, charter schools may be created by "conversion" or transition of a traditional public school into a charter school. The first charter school in Gloucester County, Victory Academy, was an example.

Governor Bob McDonnell became personally involved in the effort to open Richmond Public School's first charter school, Patrick Henry School of Science and Arts, when he hosted private fund raisers and personally donated $25,000 from his inaugural committee campaign funds (Richardson, 2012). Typical charters in Virginia are intra-district, meaning they reside within the school division boundaries in which the charter is created. The six public charters schools in Virginia, with enrollment totaling 685, serve students within division boundaries. While all charter schools in the Commonwealth reside within a division's boundaries, Virginia law does allow local school boards to serve as joint organizers in the case of a regional charter. A regional charter, a type of inter-district school choice (to be discussed later), allows for students to attend schools in another division.

Creating an inter-district charter school, or what Code of Virginia Section § 22.1-212.5 calls a "Regional Public Charter School", is an option in the Richmond metro region. While any

individual, group, or organization can propose and apply for the formation of a charter school, the most likely scenario for a regional public charter school would be a joint application from multiple school divisions. Several school divisions would have to agree to file an application jointly by establishing a contract between the charter school and the participating divisions.

Charter schools in Virginia are controlled by a management committee. In the case of a regional charter school, the management committee would consist of stakeholders from multiple divisions. This management committee would have to complete an initial charter school application to be submitted to the state Board of Education. This application includes contact information, basic educational components, logistical considerations, business components such as budgetary information, and extensive narratives that address the needs of the school, goals, mission statement, and specific educational objectives.

Once the charter is approved, a contract between the school and the divisions would have to be established. The challenge in creating a regional public charter school is having multiple divisions agree on issues such as funding, facilities, and transportation just to name a few. Once established, public charter schools must submit annual reports on their progress toward their stated goals. They can be renewed by the Board of Education for up to a five-year period by submitting a renewal application.

Regional public charter schools are required to have a lottery system for their admissions according to Code of Virginia Section *§* 22.1-212.8. The lottery could be weighted by participating divisions. This type of lottery would ensure that a set percentage of students came from each division and would create a student body that should mirror the demographics of the region. The Code of Virginia also allows for a lottery process that is tailored to the mission of the charter school program. A regional charter school focused on diversity could request a lottery

process that has specific requirements to ensure diversity. Of course, this lottery process should fall within the parameters of the Supreme Court ruling in the *Parents Involved* case and new federal guidance recently issued guidance, which explains how K-12 schools can voluntarily achieve diversity and avoid racial isolation.

Funding sources. Charter schools cannot charge tuition but can receive donations ("Charter schools," 2012). Locally, Patrick Henry School of Science and Arts receives its funding in a variety of ways. The first is per-pupil funding (PPF) from state and local sources. This money is used to pay for student meals, transportation, and other school operational costs. Another way is through federal grants. Patrick Henry was awarded a series of grants including the U.S. Department of Education Charter School Program start up grant for $471,000; the National Fish and Wildlife grant for $100,000; and the Chesapeake Bay grant for $6,790. Additionally, the school has an account of private and public donations ("Patrick Henry," 2012). Finally, charter schools may also raise additional funds by soliciting contributions through fundraising efforts, student activity fees, and by securing a bank loan to help cover operational or maintenance costs.

The website for the National Charter School Resource Center provides links to many grants. Grants listed include multiple funder types such as federal, private, foundation, and nonprofit. The U.S Department of Education's Charter School Program (CSP) oversees several grant opportunities each year. In 2007, the Virginia General Assembly created a special public charter school fund with the treasury. The public (individuals) and private sector are able to give gifts or donations to be paid into the treasury. This is done specifically for the purposes of maintaining and establishing charter schools ("Education Improvement," 2012).

Magnet Schools

Magnet schools make up the largest system of school choice in the U.S. and were originally designed to incorporate civil rights protections—including outreach to diverse family groups, overt desegregation goals, and free transportation (Siegel-Hawley & Frankenberg, 2012). They typically possess a curriculum with a specialized focus that draws students from outside a school's traditional attendance zone. Magnet schools differ from other public schools because they usually receive additional funding to support their students, supplies, teachers, and programs, and have a special program or compelling mode of instruction to attract different families, thereby increasing the diversity of the student population within them (Driver, 2010).

Magnet schools first emerged in the 1960's as a way to desegregate school districts and resolve educational inequity based on demographics or geography. Federal government support was crucial for early expansion of magnet schools. As part of an amendment to the Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA) in 1976, the Magnet School Assistance Program (MSAP) was born, providing funding to districts interested in opening magnet schools to further the goals of desegregation. Magnet schools maintained support and growth over the years by attaching themselves to the school-choice movement and continued MSAP federal funding support as part of the Education for Economic Security Act of 1984. By the year 2000, more than half of all large urban school districts used or continue to use magnets as a tool for desegregation (Siegel-Hawley et al., 2012).

Magnet programs have evolved over time and now lead a movement promoting both educational equality and excellence. A great example of the use of magnets to increase diversity and close the achievement gap is Connecticut. The state of Connecticut has established over fifty inter-district magnet schools in the metropolitan areas of Hartford, New Haven, and Waterbury,

drawing students from multiple school districts. Although this program was designed with the intent of providing racially diverse educational settings for students, it offers current evidence of the link between higher academic achievement and magnet school attendance (Siegel-Hawley et al., 2012).

In a site visit to Mauro-Sheridan Inter-district Magnet school in New Haven, Connecticut one of the researchers observed a richness of diversity within the student body at the Science, Technology, and Communications focused school (pre k–8). According to data provided in the New Haven School Board's annual report for fiscal year 2011, there were 41% African American, 22% White, 35% Hispanic, 2% Asian American, and 0% American Indian, enrolled in the school. Almost three-quarters of the students qualified for free and reduced lunch, 10% were designated as special education students, and 9% were identified as English language learners (New Haven Public Schools, 2011). The principal, Ms. Denise Coles-Cross, informed the researcher that students were selected by lottery from a consortium of localities, which contribute to the operational expenses on a per-pupil basis.

Although magnet school enrollment has increased, federal funding support for magnet schools has not kept pace. During the Obama Administration (along with the two previous administrations) far more money for resources has been directed to support the expansion of the charter school concept rather than towards the more long-standing and proven magnet school concept. An illustration of this fact is observed in the budget priorities for charter and magnet school grant programs. According to the U.S. Department of Education and the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, charter schools received more than $241 million in federal funding, while magnet schools obtained around $89.9 million for the fiscal year 2013. ("U.S. Department of," 2013; "The federal budget," 2013).

Virginia and magnet schools. Virginia is fertile ground for inter-district magnet schools as no regional magnet programs currently exist in the region, particularly with an emphasis on diversity and with special outreach to underrepresented minority groups. There are, however, several schools in the state which have been designated as "magnet schools" and operate within school division boundaries (intra-district). According to the Public School Review (2014) website, there are approximately 117 magnet public schools serving over 130,600 students in the Commonwealth. At a closer glance, these magnet schools do possess a program focus or specialized curriculum which draws students from outside their normal attendance boundaries, but do not serve students outside division boundaries (inter-district) and no school goal or focus on racial or socioeconomic diversity.

Great models for what magnet schools can look in the Commonwealth are regional Governors' Schools, which have attractive programs and a regional outreach. Governors' Schools will be discussed in more detail later. The establishment of an inter-division or regional magnet school would be implemented under Virginia legislation, Code of Virginia Section *§* 22.1-26, designed for creation of regional or "joint schools." Similar to the establishment of a regional charter school as previously mentioned, a magnet school could be created by any individual, group, or organization.

The success of a regional magnet school in the Richmond area would be closely linked to its ability to draw students of varying racial ethnicities and socioeconomic status. In order for magnet schools to achieve the desired goal of creating systematic diversity, particularly in the case of urban schools such as in Richmond and Petersburg, there needs to be a regional effort which involves other Richmond metro area school divisions, and organizers would need to determine upstart and long-term funding sources. A portion of that funding would be dedicated

to support pupil transportation, which is an important provision of magnet schools. Transportation ensures equal access, and that every parent who chooses for their child to attend a magnet school outside of their neighborhood school—or school division—is able to attend.

Federal funding sources. In addition to funding from participating school districts, the Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP) awards grants to successful applicants for three-year intervals. The United States Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement currently implements the MSAP. This federal program offers guidance and funding for magnet school development throughout the country. The MSAP grants are designed to help school districts desegregate schools where minority group isolation is creating inequities ("Creating and sustaining," 2008). Section 5304 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act states that a consortium of agencies (school districts) would be eligible to receive a MSAP grant for the purposes of desegregation. The consortium of agencies would need to agree on a plan and submit an application to the Secretary of Education.

The U.S. Department of Education reviews grant applications and selects on average between 30 to 50 schools districts per cycle. For the 2007-2010 cycle, 41 school districts received MSAP grants; and for the 2010-2013 cycle, 36 school districts received $100 million in federal funding (Siegel-Hawley & Frankenberg, 2012). These grants assist in the desegregation of public schools by supporting the elimination, reduction, and prevention of minority group isolation in elementary and secondary schools with substantial numbers of minority group students. A major objective of the MSAP is to prevent, eliminate, or reduce minority group isolation in MSAP schools. Minority group isolation refers to schools in which minority group students constitute more than 50% of school enrollment (Siegel-Hawley et al., 2012)

To help eliminate, reduce, or prevent minority group isolation in elementary and secondary schools, grants of up to $4 million were awarded to schools with substantial proportions of minority students (“U.S. Department of," 2013). This is directly in line with the goals of advocacy groups like the Looking Back, Moving Forward Steering Committee—who are in favor of diverse, equitable learning environments—and would be a major step in the right direction for the Richmond metro region. However, the challenge would be to establish regional cooperation between school divisions and leaders. The City of Richmond could apply for a MSAP grant on its own, but it would need to submit a desegregation plan along with the application.

Other funding sources. The private sector and community partners may also contribute to the financial costs of managing an inter-district educational organization. Corporate sponsors are recruited to support schools with similar visions and missions. For example, Glastonbury-East Hartford Magnet School, a school with a science, technology and math focus, partnered with NASA and had its students to video conference with astronauts and to collaborate with rocket scientists. Similarly, a local regional magnet school could potentially partner with local companies in the same way.

Private Schools

The Code of Virginia Section *§* 22.1-19 allows for the Virginia Board of Education to accredit non-public schools at the request of the individual school. This process is done through the Virginia Council for Private Education. Nonpublic schools that are accredited must abide by specific requirements for health, safety, time requirements, and admissions ("Virginia council for," 2013). All aspects of a nonpublic school would be run through an individual or board as a non-profit entity or a for-profit venture. While the researchers do not advocate the creation of a

private regional school, it is presented as an option to be considered. Financial hurdles remain as well for parents making the choice for private schools. Green and Davis (2010) contend that during economic hard times, parents have a tendency to choose homeschooling rather than expensive private school education.

Some researchers assert that Blacks are more likely to take a school choice in the public sector (Green & Davis, 2010). There is also a history of private schools in Virginia having a negative connotation when it came to school integration and diversity. This dates back over 50 years to Senator Harry Byrd's "Southern Manifesto" that opposed integration (Thomas, 2005). Many private schools that were founded in the 1950's have a legacy of being segregation academies providing an all-White schooling alternative to integrated schools (Siegel-Hawley, 2013). If a group or individual wanted to create a regional school that valued diversity but lacked the necessary regional support to start one collaboratively, creating a private school might be a viable option. They are often primarily supported, established, and run by a private or nongovernmental agency. These schools are able to charge students tuition and are generally more expensive than public schools. They reserve the right to decide which students to admit to the school.

Funding sources. Private or non-public schools may be funded through a combination of tuition, private and corporate donations, and scholarships. Establishing initial and long term funding, and selecting a governing body would be significant obstacles in creating this type of regional school, but it would come with the least amount of oversight and regulatory restrictions, and allows for complete control. Traditionally, in Virginia, there have been two primary means of reliable funding for private schools—student tuition and private donations. Through the passing of recent legislation, Virginia now encourages charitable donations to nonpublic schools.

It has broadened the base of tuition through tax-credits, called the Education Improvement Scholarship Program. These and other potential funding sources are discussed next.

Education improvement scholarships program. Virginia's new tax-credit scholarship program, signed into law by Governor Bob McDonnell in 2013, represents a softening of resistance to vouchers and school choice in general. This public voucher-like program establishes a need-based Educational Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit for students in grades K-12. Individual and business taxpayers can receive a tax credit equal to 65% of the donation to scholarship granting organizations, nonprofits that provide private school scholarships (Caldwell, 2012). The program distributes these funds to lower income students at multiple schools, and it complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ("Educational improvement," 2012).

The new tax-credit law appeases some proponents of vouchers who see it as a turning point to help students gain easier and more affordable access to better education; however, some advocates don't believe it goes far enough. In a comprehensive guide on school choice, The Friedman Foundation, an organization dedicated to advancing school choice, points out shortcomings of Virginia's new tax-credit scholarship legislation: (1) there is a $25 million funding cap which limits scholarships; (2) qualifying students must come from households with family income less than 300% of the federal poverty line; and (3) the program is limited by the per-pupil funding, which is 42% of the funding available to public school students ("The abcs of," 2013). Another outspoken opponent of this new tax-credit legislation is the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus. A January 2014 *Richmond Times Dispatch* article, noted that one of the primary goals of the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus is to discourage using public tax dollars to fund vouchers or tax credits for business to provide private school scholarships (Nolan, 2014).

The longevity of the Educational Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit may be in jeopardy as the newly elected Governor of Virginia, Terry McAuliffe, differs greatly than the former governor on education policy. During a 2013 gubernatorial debate with then Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli, McAuliffe claimed that Cuccinelli's plan for tax scholarships (and greater choice in general) would be particularly harmful for Virginia public schools (Ujifusa, 2013).

Other funding sources. One researcher interviewed the Head of School for the Virginia Tidewater Academy, Frances Joyner, to help identify primary sources used to fund and operate the private school. While these funding sources are specific to Tidewater Academy, they could apply to any private school. Additionally, she was asked about supplemental funding sources that she is considering, but does not currently use. She notes that establishing a Board of Directors is imperative to the long-term health of the school as they are charged with maintaining the financial wellness of the school (F. Joyner, personal communication, December, 2013).

Ms. Joyner notes five primary funding sources for Tidewater Academy. She first identifies endowments and charitable giving sources. Some private schools use the interest from these gifts to help fund operating expenses or to cover unforeseen costs. When needed, schools might spend part of an endowment to cover a shortfall. The second source she identifies is tuition; this is a fee that students are charged for the opportunity to attend the school. These fees vary, though in an article by David Salisbury (2003), he explains that in 2000 the national average for private elementary schools was $3,267. He also notes that less than 21% of private schools charge more than $5,000 tuition.

The third source mentioned is fundraising**.** Private schools will hold events or reach out to businesses, individuals, or corporate partners for donations to help raise money for general operating costs or to fund a specific project or need. Many private schools have an employee

other than the Head of School that is in charge of overseeing fundraisers and reaching out to business partners or charitable organizations. The fourth source is grants**.** Private schools are able to apply for a number of grants to fund school programs. These may be a single gift or a multi-year agreement.

Three such philanthropic organizations that contribute grants to private schools are the Cameron and Beazley Foundation grants and the Community Foundation grant. The final source Ms. Joyner identifies is a loan**.** Some schools borrow what is called an "operating loan" from a local financial institution. These funds are used to pay the monthly operating budget and are often paid back each year after tuition is collected. Based on the projected budget, a new loan would be secured each year to cover additional costs.

Additional funds for Virginia private schools may be available from companies like Altria who works with a network of national organizations supporting programs throughout the eastern portion of the United States. Though they do not give directly to schools, they do work with a number of nonprofits in Richmond that run programs for school children. Altria currently works locally with Art180, The Math Science Innovation Center, SPARC, the Boys and Girls Club, and the Middle School Renaissance among others. In order to be considered for funding, a new school would need the backing of local superintendents, local school administration, the mayor, and the regional public (M. Witherspoon, personal communication, August, 2013).

Governor's Schools

Governor's Schools provide gifted student with academic opportunities in specific fields, such as the visual and performing arts, science and technology, and government and international studies. Applicants for a regional Governor's school gain admission upon successful completion in competitive application process, which includes aptitude tests, interviews, and

recommendations. Once accepted, students can focus on a specific area of study in a rigorous learning environment, but most likely one that is not racially or economically diverse. To help illustrate this point, a closer look is given at student enrollment trends for the Maggie L. Walker Governor's School located in the City of Richmond.

The enrollment policy at the Maggie L. Walker lacks a diversity element, which is illustrated by its current student demographics, where 75% of the students are White, 8 percent Black, and 12.5% Asian Americans (Ryan, 2010). Furthermore, a look at the school's acceptance rates by race over a twelve-year period is even more telling. The racial acceptance rate from 2001 to 2012 shows that only 4.9% of Blacks were accepted compared with 23.8% of Whites (see Table D1, Appendix C). Additionally, during that same time, on average, only 6.9% of Blacks were accepted of the 25.6% who applied, while 74% of Whites were accepted of the 55.7% who applied (see Table D2, Appendix C).

As previously mentioned, Virginia law provides a framework for the establishment of regional or joint schools. These schools, with the consent of the State Board of Education, may establish regional governing boards comprised of representatives from the school boards of each participating school division (Code of Virginia Section *§* 22.1-26). These governing boards are tasked with developing admissions and other policies for the schools. Virginia Governor's Schools are great examples of regional cooperation to create schools under the state's joint schools law. They are a form of competitive specialty schools with some magnet elements because they attract talented students interested in a particular field of study, although not designed with integration in mind.

The Commonwealth of Virginia currently has 19 schools designated as Governor's Schools. These schools are regional comparatives that serve gifted high school students. Each

school has a specific curricular focus from the arts to government and international studies to math and science. The idea of establishing another Governor's School to meet the needs of a regional middle school is plausible; however, obstacles do exist: (1) there is a need to gain regional cooperation; (2) state legislation impacting the creation of a Governor's school would have to be changed so that students in the lower grade levels could attend; (3) Governor's schools would need to alter their admissions process to be less restrictive and add an element of diversity; and (4) more outreach is needed to inform and attract underrepresented minority groups, as well as provide transportation services for those in need.

Funding sources. Governor's schools are funded through a mix of General Assembly funds and a proportional share from local school divisions ("Governor's school programs," 2012). Three primary sources of revenue are utilized to finance the operation of the Governor's School programs. First, the Virginia General Assembly in collaboration with the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) provides funding to these programs. Secondly, the participating school divisions provide funding on a per-pupil basis in combination with the revenue from VDOE. Thirdly, Governor's Schools which enroll students for an entire academic school year—Academic-Year Governor's Schools—receive additional funding through the Virginia General Assembly, referred to as "the Governor's School add on." This particular funding stream supplements the designated share of each participating divisions' per pupil allocation ("Governor's school programs," 2012).

College Partnership Laboratory Schools

The final, and relatively new, school choice option in Virginia to be discussed is College Partnership Laboratory Schools. In 2010, the Commonwealth of Virginia General Assembly passed House Bill 1389 and Senate Bill 736, allowing for the creation of college partnership

laboratory schools. These schools would be established and directly connected to a Virginia college or university. A board set up by the sponsoring institution would establish and govern these schools. Unlike lab schools in other states, these college partnership laboratory schools are public schools funded by public monies and governed by the organization with authority given by the state Board of Education (Fornash, 2012). Furthermore, state law prohibits the governing body from charging tuition and requires that admission be based on a lottery system. These are unique requirements to Virginia. Successful lab schools, such as the University of Chicago's Lab School, are essentially private schools with a traditional admissions process ("The university of," 2014).

The process for establishing a lab school has several components. First, there would need to be a public or private university that is willing to sponsor such an initiative. Secondly, the college or university must have an established teacher preparation program already in place. There is an application process with specific requirements and ultimately, the state Board of Education would provide approval and funding. To help with the planning process, there is planning funding of up to $600,000 available through the application process. The Virginia Secretary of Education awards these planning grants and provides guidance through the Virginia College/University Partnership Laboratory School Planning Grant Application document. The application process is currently closed and there is no indication when the next cycle of grants will be awarded.

If funding and legislation are reauthorized, this type of school could be a possible solution for a regional middle school in the Richmond metro area because it would not have traditional geographic boundary limitations and the attraction of a college school platform would help incentivize suburban residents to participate more readily. Finally, the goals of a laboratory

school set by the Commonwealth of Virginia are in line with some of the best practices of school reform and therefore would complement the initiatives of a regional school focused on diversity.

According to state guidance documents, a College Partnership Laboratory School should:

- Stimulate innovative programs in preschool through grade 12;
- Provide opportunities for innovation in instruction and assessment;
- Provide teachers with an avenue for delivering innovative instruction and school scheduling, management and structure;
- Encourage performance-based educational programs;
- Establish high standards for both teachers and administrators;
- Encourage greater collaboration between pre-kindergarten and postsecondary program providers; and
- Develop model programs (Fornash, 2012).

While these goals do not specifically reference racial or economic diversity, they are all goals that are in line with best practices. The challenge would be designing a lottery based admissions process to ensure diversity. Code of Virginia Chapter 26, Establishment of College Partnership Laboratory Schools (2010) reads:

> Enrollment shall be open to any child who is deemed to reside within the Commonwealth through a lottery process on a space-available basis. A waiting list shall be established if adequate space is not available to accommodate all students whose parents have requested to be entered in the lottery process. Such waiting list shall also be prioritized through a lottery process and parents shall be informed of their student's position on the list.

This law gives no further clarification about the specifics of the lottery. The application process would need to be clear about the lottery process and the school design would need to appeal to a wide audience so that students in the surrounding counties would apply for admission. Ideally, a lottery system could be weighted to ensure economic and geographic diversity. An example of this type of weighted lottery is currently used in the Denver Schools of Science and Technology, previously referenced as one of the case studies. A weighted lottery process would have to be approved during the planning process. If that were not an option, diversity could still be attained through a traditional lottery system as long as the applicant pool was sufficiently diverse and pulled from a wide geographic area. The creation of a lab school should be considered as an option for a regional middle school as there is a source of funding, a potential for a diversity-driven enrollment process, and flexibility to set a school focus on integration.

Funding sources. A major funding source to create a new lab school would be the Virginia College/University Partnership Laboratory School Planning Grant. These grants are available to both public and private institutions as they partner with one or more school boards. The total amount given to those receiving the grant would be $600,000. This is a one-time grant awarded to a university to help with the creation of a new laboratory school. Once awarded the grant, there are no renewals available. In 2012, four state universities were awarded this grant: George Mason University received $145,500; James Madison University received $228,000; Longwood University received $86,000; and Virginia State University received $140,000 ("Governor McDonnell," 2012).

Virginia State University issued a progress report in 2012 after being awarded the grant. They are moving forward on creating a middle school with a STEM focus that will serve students from South-Central Virginia. These students are expected to have varying ethnic,

socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds. Virginia State University also expects to serve students with disabilities and those with limited English proficiency ("Virginia State," 2012).

According to Code of Virginia Section *§* 23-299.9, governing boards of lab schools are able to accept grants, donations, or gifts as long as the money is not contrary to the law or terms of the agreement between the Board of Education and the school. Lab schools may also receive a portion of state and federal resources that have been allocated for special education programs and personnel. Additionally, there are funds lab schools can apply for from the College Partnership Laboratory School Fund. Corporate partners such as the National Science Foundation, and Microsoft have also supported lab schools in Virginia ("Funding of," 2012). Within the confines of the law, participating divisions could elect to provide per-pupil funding.

Appendix E summarizes the Virginia school choice offerings which have the potential to support the creation of a regional middle school. This matrix offers a general description of relevant factors that affect school choice options in Virginia. The following section explores the desirability for the creation of a regional middle school.

Phase II Results

The data gathered and evaluated in the first phase was used to guide and inform the development of a survey instrument in Phase Two of the study. The survey was used to help quantify the desirability of a regional middle school in the metro Richmond area. A simple descriptive survey was administered to three comparative groups to describe their perceptions of diversity on the impact of student and school success; the type of regional school and program desired; and willingness for regional cooperation for the creation of a regional school for the Richmond area.

This phase of the study addresses *Research Question 4:* Is there regional support to create a regional middle school?

The survey was designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data, which allowed for data triangulation. Yin (2009) notes that data triangulation is one way to maximize the authenticity of the potential findings. Some survey questions included open-ended response fields where a participant could provide additional descriptive information leading to greater insights.

Data-collection Method: Online Survey

Data collected for this research question was acquired through the use of an online survey. A twenty-four question survey was disseminated through Survey Monkey via three separate regional groups. The first regional group was individuals on the listserv from the Looking Back, Moving Forward conference; they included conference participants or those who signed up to receive information from their organization. This is an organization dedicated to advocating for race, class, opportunity and equality for school children throughout the region. Participants who attended this conference and/or signed to receive information will be referred to as "LBMF" on tables and figures throughout this document. This listserv group was comprised of approximately 400 individuals. Another local advocacy group, Bridging Richmond, sent the survey to a listserv of individuals who attended one of the Bridging Richmond Middle School Summits (referred to as Bridging Richmond). Bridging Richmond is an organization dedicated to bringing local resources together to help ensure college and career readiness for the region's youth. Participants from these summits will be referred to as "BRMSS" in tables and figures throughout this document. The Bridging Richmond listserv contained approximately 160 individuals.

The final group that was sent this survey was parents, which included the Richmond District Parent Teacher Association (PTA)—encompassing PTA groups in Goochland, Henrico, Hanover, Richmond City and Powhatan—and parents that were sent the survey directly from the researchers through social media outlets. This group will be considered the "PTA" group, and was comprised of approximately 264 individuals. Attempts to contact Chesterfield County PTA directly were unsuccessful. An e-mail with an introduction to the survey and a survey link was sent out to all participating groups on or about December 9, 2013. All respondents had until January 15, 2014 to complete the survey.

The survey was completed by 250 individuals from the three participant groups and represents an overall response rate of 30.5%. The responses from this survey can by no means be generalized to reflect the region as whole, but they do represent groups that are invested in supporting the region's schools. These three groups actively advocate for schools and school children in the region. See Table 1 for a breakdown of survey respondents by group affiliation.

Table 1

Respondents by Participant Group (n=219)

	Respondent Percentage	Total Responses
The Looking Back, Moving Forward Conference	37.9%	83
The Bridging Richmond Middle School Summit	15.5%	34
Both	1.4%	3
Neither (PTA)	45.2%	99

Note: There were about 31 survey participants who did not identify with a respondent group.

Several other pieces of demographic information were collected on a voluntary basis to help further identify respondents, including where respondents live and their racial make-up. Table 2 shows a breakdown of survey respondents by locality and gives a greater since of how the survey sample measured up against the Richmond metro population as a whole.

Table 2

Respondents by Locality (n = 220)

	Survey Respondent Percentage	Metro Richmond* Population Percentage
Chesterfield	20.5%	25.3%
City of Richmond	38.2%	16.3%
Hanover	3.2%	7.9%
Henrico	27.7%	24.5%
Other (Outside above localities)	10.5%	26.0%

Note. There were 30 survey participants who did not identify with a locality.
*2013 data sourced from the Greater Richmond Partnership, Inc.; Metro Richmond encompasses the geographic area included in the Metropolitan Statistical Area.

The majority of survey respondents identified themselves as either White or Black/African American (henceforth referred to as "Black"). See Table 3 for a breakdown of survey respondents by race/ethnicity (henceforth referred to as "race") and Table 4 for a breakdown of each locality by race.

Table 3

Respondents by Race (n=209)

	Respondent Percentage	Metro Richmond* Population Percentage
Black/African-American	41.10%	29.5%
Latino(a)/Hispanic	1.40%	5.3%
White	47.00%	59.5%
Multiracial	3.70%	1.9%
Did not identify	6.80%	—

Note: There were 41 survey participants who did not identify with a race.
*Data sourced from 2012 U.S. Census Bureau Intercensal Population Estimates; Metro Richmond encompasses the geographic area included in the Metropolitan Statistical Area.

Table 4

Percentage of Respondents by Race for each Locality (n = 209)

	Chesterfield	City of Richmond	Henrico	Metro Richmond*
Black/African-American	52.10%	21.40%	66.10%	29.5%
Latino(a)/Hispanic	2.20%	1.20%	1.60%	5.3%
White	33.30%	69.10%	19.40%	59.5%
Multiracial	4.40%	1.90%	4.80%	1.9%
Did not identify	8.90%	7.10%	8.10%	—

Note: *Data sourced from 2012 U.S. Census Bureau Intercensal Population Estimates; Metro Richmond encompasses the geographic area included in the Metropolitan Statistical Area.

For the race, locality, participant group, and other demographic subgroup categories, the researchers chose not to use respondent data where the subgroup total was less than 5% of the total number of respondents. For example, when comparing how different racial groups answer a particular question, only responses from Blacks and Whites will be compared because the other groups had less than a 5% response rate. The same applies to Hanover County in the locality comparisons where only 3.2% of the total responses came from Hanover County. When comparing the responses from different localities, only Henrico, Chesterfield, and the city of Richmond will be compared.

Over half, or 55.7% of the respondents, indicated that they have school age children. Of the respondents with school age children, 72.4% of them said that their children attend public schools; but there were respondents who have children in other types of school settings. Individuals who identified as not having school age children represent 44.3% of respondents. Respondents with children in private school represent 19.8% and another 18.1% have children in a specialty center or attend the Governor's School.

Of the respondents with school age children, 71.4% of them have children in pre-kindergarten or elementary school, 40.0% have middle school age children, and 38.1% have high school age children. Two hundred and eighteen the respondents gave their age and education level. About 90% of respondents had a bachelor's degree or higher. The survey respondent education level is much higher than the overall average education level of the regional population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). There was a wide distribution of respondents by age with the largest age group (41.3%) being between the ages of 40 and 49.

Findings Related to Research Question 4 (Phase II)

Analysis of Survey

The data analysis that follows represents the opinions of three influential advocacy groups in the Richmond metro area. These respondents—by associating with one of these groups—are engaged in the regional dialogue to make schools better for the children in the region. The survey population was not statistically large, thus the findings may not be generalized beyond the metro Richmond area. However, this survey offers important insight into regional perspectives and perceptions of diversity, the level of support for and the type of regional school desired, and obstacles to regional cooperation.

A thorough analysis of respondent perceptions to survey questions is laid out in the next section according to pre-defined survey themes. The four survey themes are as follows:

- perceptions of school diversity;
- perceptions of regional support;
- preferences for school type and program focus; and
- perceived obstacles to regional cooperation.

Survey questions are analyzed based upon how they appear within a particular theme, not necessarily in the order in which survey respondents took the survey. For each question, overall respondent results will be given, then data will be disaggregated by the three main subgroups—race, locality, and participant group—and finally, any statistically significant differences observed between the three subgroups will be noted. When a statistical analysis was performed comparing two or more data sets (or subgroups), a significance level of $p < 0.05$ was used; this will be noted in the text as "statistically significant" and in tables and figures by an asterisk (*) followed by the actual p value.

Survey questions where respondents provided qualitative data, or where they could freely respond to a question, will be analyzed for emerging themes. These types of questions probed respondent perceptions about what a regional school should look like and what obstacles might pose a challenge to its creation.

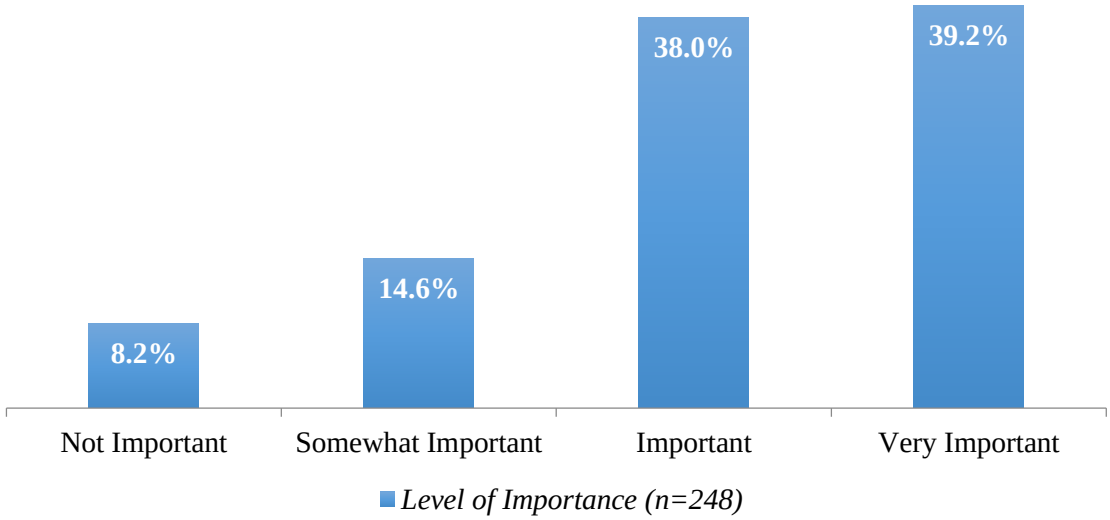
Finding for Research Question 4 (RQ4)

Theme 1: Perceptions of School Diversity

Importance of Diversity when Selecting a School

Of those that responded to this question, 77.2%, felt that both racial and socioeconomic diversity were important or very important when selecting a school for their child (see Figure 1). Participants were asked to skip this question if they had no school age children; this left a little over sixty percent of total respondents to answer this question.

Figure 1. Level of Importance of Racial and Socioeconomic Diversity when Selecting a School



Source: Question 3, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013.

When comparing Black and White respondents, about 90% of Blacks felt racial and socioeconomic diversity was either important or very important when choosing a school for their child, while only 74.6% of Whites felt the same way (see Figure D1, Appendix D). This variance

represents a statistically significant difference (p=0.044) in how Blacks and Whites perceive the importance of diversity when selecting a school for their child.

Analyzing the data across the three localities shows no significant difference in respondents' perceptions about racial and socioeconomic diversity when selecting a school for their child (Figure D2, Appendix D).

Finally, evaluating the data by participant group reveals a statistically significant difference (p=0.000) on how they perceive the importance of racial and socioeconomic diversity when selecting a school for their child. The Looking Back, Moving Forward participants believe racial and socioeconomic diversity is more important than the other two respondent groups (Figure D3, Appendix D).

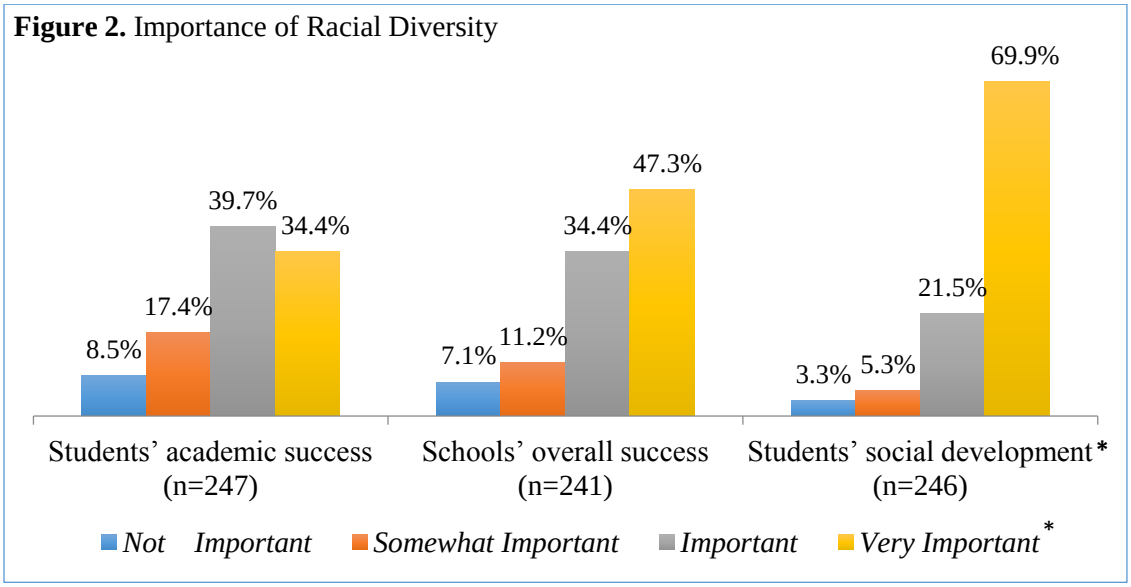
Importance of Racial Diversity

Overall, respondents perceive racial diversity to be most important to students' social development as compared to students' academic or schools' overall success. In all, 69.9% of respondents rated racial diversity as very important to students' social development, while 47.3% of respondents believe it is very important to schools' overall success and 34.4% indicated it is very important to students' academic success (Figure 2). This comparison of racial diversity importance to students' social development represents a statistically significant difference (p=0.000) from students' and schools' success measures.

While diversity is an important factor for students' social development, this study highlights decades of research that demonstrates diversity is just as important to students' academic success (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2007). This difference in respondent perceptions between the importance of diversity to students' social development and academic success represents a perception gap. Unless perceptions of diversity in the region become more in line

with proven research, this gap may pose as an obstacle for the creation of a regional school where one element is a focus on diversity.

Figure 2. Importance of Racial Diversity



Source: Question 1, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013.
*p=0.000.

There were also statistically significant differences among respondents on the importance of racial diversity to student and school success measures by subgroups of race, locality, and participant group. Regarding the race subgroup, Blacks perceive racial diversity to be significantly more important to students' academic and schools' overall success than Whites (see Figures D4 and D5, Appendix D). Blacks, at 47.8% believe racial diversity was very important to student academic success compared to only 23.3% of Whites who felt the same way. Likewise, 55.2% of Blacks consider racial diversity to be very important to a school's overall academic success while just 43.1% of Whites do so. Perhaps this difference could be explained in part by Black participants' perspectives of the historical treatment of Blacks and their struggles to integrate racially segregated schools.

When comparing the importance of racial diversity by locality, respondents living in the City of Richmond felt that racial diversity was not as important to students' academic success compared to respondents' in the other two localities representing a statistically significant difference (see Figure D6, Appendix D). Considering that Richmond City schools are predominantly Black, the outcome here is in stark contrast to the previous racial diversity results, where Blacks perceived racial diversity to be significantly more important to students' academic success than Whites. Table 4 (noted earlier) does provide some insight; it shows that the racial make-up of respondents by locality is not necessarily representative of City of Richmond demographics. As noted, Whites make up the majority of respondents at 69.1% in the city, while Blacks make up only 21.4% of respondents.

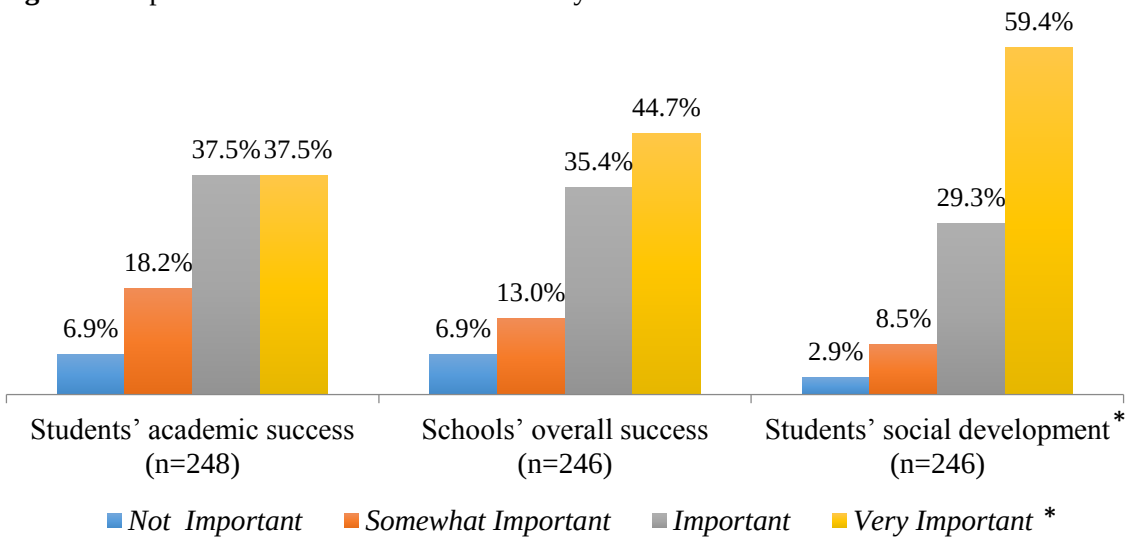
Finally, the results for gauging the importance of racial diversity by participating groups illustrate a statistical significant difference (p=0.013) between the Looking Back, Moving Forward group compared to the other two groups. Eight out of 10 Looking Back, Moving Forward respondents believe that racial diversity is very important to students' social development compared with six out of ten Bridging Richmond and PTA respondents who felt the same way (see Figure D7, Appendix D). This was not necessarily surprising to the researchers considering the Looking Back, Moving Forward regional group is a primary local advocate for diverse learning environments.

Importance of Socioeconomic Diversity

A statistically significant majority of respondents perceive socioeconomic diversity to be most important to students' social development as compared to students' academic or schools' overall success. As presented in Figure 3, 59.4% of respondents rated socioeconomic diversity as very important to students' social development while 44.7% of respondents feel it is very

important to schools' overall success and 37.5% perceive it is very important to students' academic success. As noted earlier, the region's perception on the importance of diversity to students' academic success is not in line (and much lower) than research shows.

Figure 3. Importance of Socioeconomic Diversity



Source: Question 2, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013.
*p=0.000.

When comparing the "Very Important" responses for racial and socioeconomic diversity across the measures of student and school success and student social development, similar trends in both parameters are observed (see Figure D8, Appendix D). Respondents' perceive racial and socioeconomic diversity to be least important to students' academic success and most important to students' social development. Moreover, a statistically significant difference (p=0.009) is noted between racial and socioeconomic diversity across the measure of students' social development, favoring racial diversity as more important than socioeconomic diversity.

Disaggregating the data by race reveals a statistically significant (p=0.030) difference between Blacks and Whites on their perception of the importance of socioeconomic diversity, where Black respondents believe socioeconomic diversity is more important to students'

academic success than White respondents. This is demonstrated in Figure D9 (Appendix D) 87.8% of Black indicates that socioeconomic diversity is either important or very important whereas 70.9% of Whites felt the same way.

No significant difference in perception exists between the three localities when comparing the importance of socioeconomic diversity (see Figure D10, Appendix D).

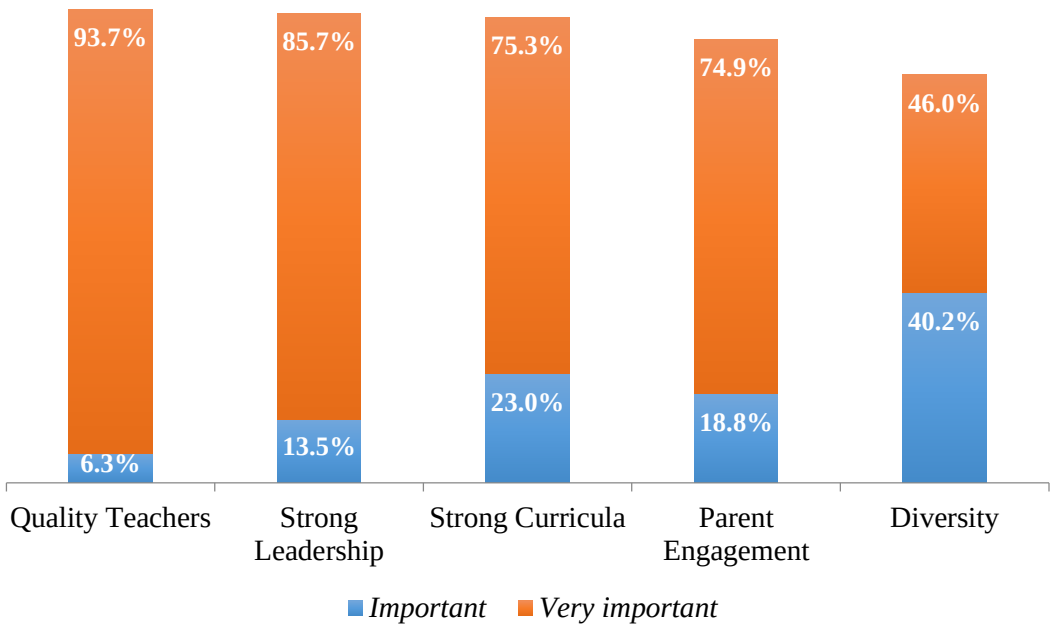
There is a statistically significant difference (p=0.017) between participant groups, where the Looking Back, Moving Forward group felt socioeconomic diversity was more important than Bridging Richmond and PTA. For example, 54.9% of the Looking Back, Moving Forward respondents felt that socioeconomic diversity was very important as compared to only 35.3% of Bridging Richmond and 38.8% of PTA (see Figure D11, Appendix D). As noted in the analysis for racial diversity, a higher perception on the importance of socioeconomic by the Looking Back, Moving Forward regional group (over the other two groups) is perhaps attributed to their staunch advocacy work to promote diverse learning environments in the region.

Important Characteristics to School Success

While the respondents clearly value diversity in schools, it is important to determine other school indicators that are important to the region. Figure 4 shows the breakdown of respondents' "Important" and "Very Important" selections for five characteristics the researchers deemed important to school success. Teacher quality is the most important characteristic for respondents overall with 93.7% indicating it as very important and the remaining 6.3% indicating it is important. Strong leadership seemed to be only slightly less important with 85.7% of respondents reporting that as very important. No definition was given for what successful means, so this question measured whatever their personal criteria for success might be.

Strong curricula and parent engagement were both rated by 75.3% of respondents as very important. Diversity had the lowest "Very Important" response rate overall. While 86.2% of the respondents stated that diversity was either important or very important, only 46.0% of respondents indicated that it is very important. This will be valuable information for a new regional school to consider: even though the region values diversity, there are other aspects of a school that respondents perceived as just as important to success. As we outlined in the first portion of this paper, the research clearly shows the positive impact of diversity on student achievement (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2007). It will be important to note the perception gap between what the research shows is important and what respondents perceives as important.

Figure 4. Importance of School Characteristics to School Success (n = 239)

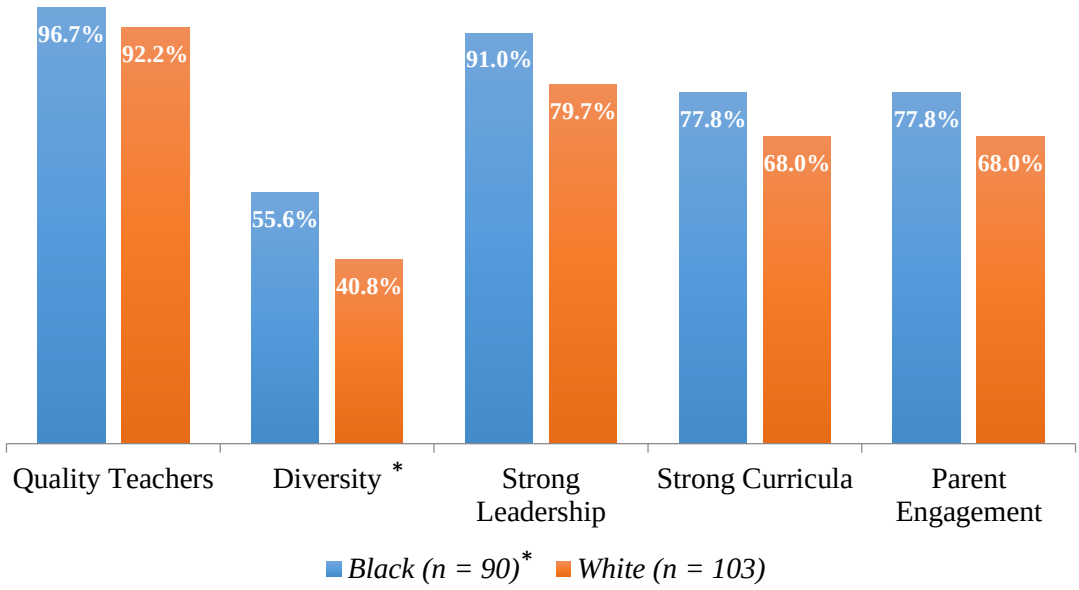


Source: Question 6, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013.

When analyzed by race, 96.7% of the Blacks and 92.2% of Whites chose quality teachers as very important (see Figure 5). In the other four categories, Black respondents rated these

characteristics as very important—more so than White respondents. There is a statistically significant difference (p=0.013) between White (40.8%) and black (55.6%) respondents' answers about the importance of diversity to a school's success, favoring Black respondents as believing diversity to be an important characteristic to school success. Similarly, black respondents also favored the final three categories more than White respondents.

Figure 5. Perceptions of School Characteristics to School Success by Race



Source: Question 6, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013.
*p=0.013.

Analyzing the responses by group produced several trends. The respondents from Looking Back, Moving Forward, Bridging Richmond, and PTA group all rated leadership and teacher quality similarly. They each had one category where their group was different than the other two. The respondents from the PTA group rated parental involvement as very important 85% of the time, compared to 70.6% from Bridging Richmond and 66.2% from Looking Back, Moving Forward. The PTA group, by in large, is made up of parents of school age children and

therefore may be more inclined to rate parent involvement higher than the other groups. A strong curriculum was rated more important to the Bridging Richmond group. Of the Bridging Richmond respondents, 85.7% rated curricula as very important, compared to 66.3% of Looking Back, Moving Forward and 78.8% of PTA respondents. Finally, diversity was rated highest by the Looking Back, Moving Forward group where 56.6% of the respondents rated diversity as very important to a schools overall success, compared to 41.2% of Bridging Richmond and 42.4% of the PTA respondents**.**

Analyzing the results by geographic area, the overall trend of teacher quality emerged as having the most "Very Important" selections. In fact, all of the respondents from Chesterfield indicated that teacher quality was very important to a school's success.

The most variability occurred in the responses to the category of diversity (see Table D1, Appendix D). Only 34.5% of respondents from the City of Richmond rated diversity as very important, compared with 62.2% of the respondents from Chesterfield and 50.8% of respondents from Henrico. This may be explained by the changing demographics in Henrico and Chesterfield. Henrico schools have reached majority-minority status while Chesterfield is quickly becoming a majority-minatory school division; both school divisions have examples of racially and economically diverse schools. Richmond City, however, lacks this same kind of diversity within in its own division boundary which may help to explain their perceptions of importance.

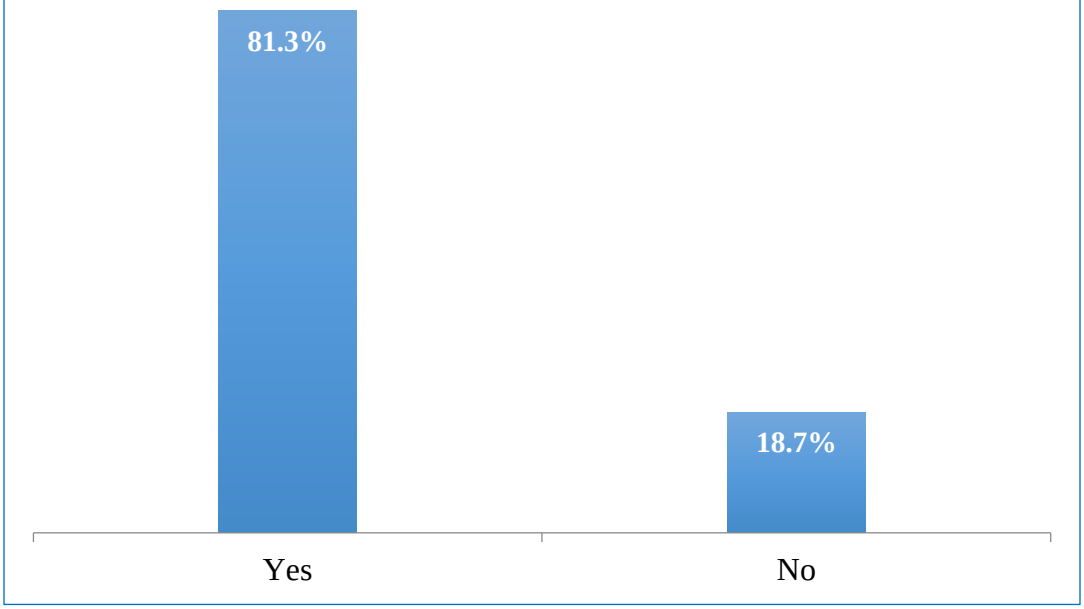
Theme 2: Perceptions of Regional Support

Respondents' Associates Support for a Regional School

The results indicate that 81.3% of the respondents assumed their associates would support the creation of a new regional school (see Figure 6). Here, the researchers were

attempting to broaden their reach to better understand the scope of support. Having respondents generalize how their friends, neighbors, and coworkers perceive this issue gives a better sense of how the region as a whole might feel.

Figure 6. Majority of Associates Support Creation of a Regional School (n = 230)



Source: Question 7, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013.

A further analysis showed high levels of support among people with whom respondents associate, based on their race, where they live, and group affiliation. There was a statistically significant difference (p=0.009) in the level of support among affiliates of Black respondents compared to their White counterparts. Even though both groups through their friends would support the creation of a new regional school, 90.0% of Black respondents thought as much compared to 75.7% of White respondents. Of the White respondents, 24.3% indicated that their associates would not support a new regional school compared to 10.0% of Black respondents (see Figure D12, Appendix D). Hence, the support among affiliates of Black respondents was close to 16 percentage points higher than White respondents.

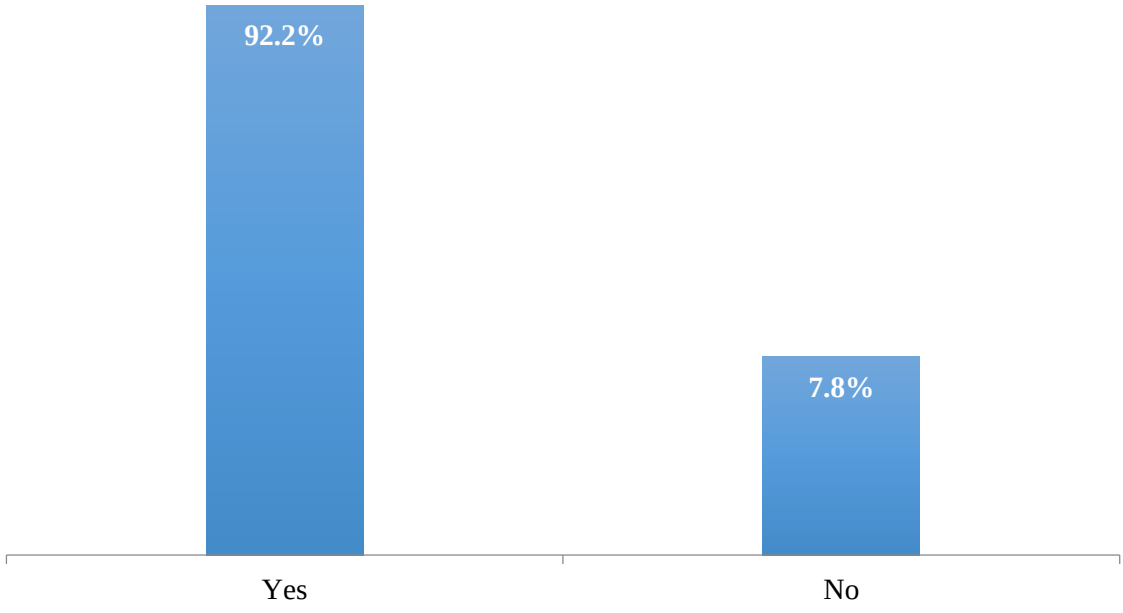
The respondents from the City of Richmond indicated that 86.9% of the people with whom they associate would support a new regional school. Henrico County respondents indicated an 83.6% level of support among associates. Chesterfield County respondents reported that 71.1% of their affiliates would be in favor of the creation of a regional school (see Table D2, Appendix D). Though Chesterfield respondents' associates are the least likely to support the creation of a regional middle school, there is no statistically significant difference between Chesterfield and Henrico. There is, however, a statistical difference (p=0.029) between respondents of the City of Richmond and Chesterfield. This could be the result of lingering negative impressions and feelings from the annexation of Chesterfield to the City of Richmond in the late 60s and early 70s (Moeser & Dennis, 1982).

The respondents from Looking Back, Moving Forward indicated that 75.9% of the people with whom they associate would support a new regional school. Similarly, respondents from Bridging Richmond reported that 70.6% of their associates would support the creation of a new regional school. Furthermore, respondents from the PTA groups indicated a 91.9% level of support among affiliates (see Figure D13, Appendix D). There could be many reasons for this high support, but one explanation could be that PTA respondents have current school age children and are more in tune with the needs of their children. One PTA respondent wrote: "Most parents that I know understand there are fewer and fewer quality, varied educational opportunities for our children other than private school and would support a school with diversity and higher learning standards" (Regional School Survey, 2013).

Respondent Support for the Creation of a Regional School

When asked directly to indicate their support for the creation of a regional school, 92.2% answered favorably (Figure 7). This is 10.9 percentage points higher than the indicated level of support with whom respondents' associate.

Figure 7. Respondent Support for a New Regional School (n= 230)



Source: Question 8, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013.

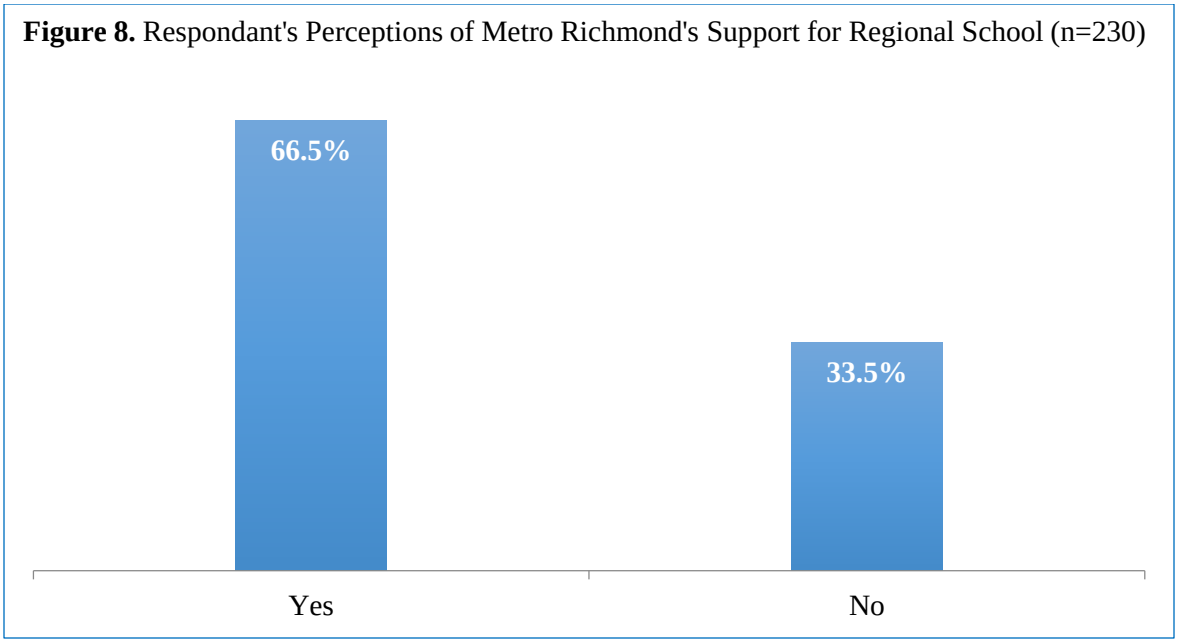
When the data from this question was disaggregated by race, locality, and participant group, support in favor of the creation of a new regional school among individual respondents was substantial. There was no statistically significant difference in the level of support among Blacks and Whites. In all, 95.6% of Black respondents and 92.2% of White respondents expressed their support (see Table D3, Appendix D). The respondents who took this survey are all directly connected to school advocacy groups and therefor may be more informed about the need for regional cooperation, whereas their associates may not.

Of the respondents that reside in the City of Richmond, 94.1% were in favor of the creation of a new regional school. Henrico County respondents were unanimously in favor of establishing a new regional school (see Table D4, Appendix D). A vast majority of the respondents from Chesterfield County were also in favor of the creation of a regional school with 84.4% indicating their support. There is no statistically significant difference between Chesterfield and Richmond; however, there is a statistically significant difference (p=0.001) between Chesterfield and Henrico. This difference between Chesterfield and the other localities may be explained by the demographic make-up of the localities.

Metro Richmond Support for a Regional School with a Focus and that Promotes Diversity

This question attempts to gauge respondents' perception of whether the metro Richmond area would support the creation of a regional school with a program focus and that promotes diversity. By a two to one margin, respondents said that they believe the metro Richmond area would support the creation of a regional school with a program focus (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math –STEM, leadership, development, Arts, etc.) and that explicitly promotes diversity (see Figure 8). Additionally, they are asked to comment why or why not. There were 138 comments made, and a nearly equal split between positive and negative comments.

Figure 8. Respondant's Perceptions of Metro Richmond's Support for Regional School (n=230)



Source: Question 11, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013.

When this question is analyzed by race, there is a 7% difference between Whites and Blacks. Sixty-six percent of White respondents believe that the area would support the creation of the school with an emphasis on diversity, 73.3% of Black respondents believe the same (see Table D5, Appendix D). Blacks tended to be more in favor of the creation of a regional school that supports diversity throughout the survey. As suggested earlier, this perception could be a result of historical educational inequities Blacks have experienced, and the more favorable educational opportunities Whites have enjoyed. The Black respondents seem more willing to support efforts to give their children more diverse choices for educational success. Additionally, some Black families may have chosen to move to the suburbs in search of more diverse schools with better educational opportunities.

When this question is analyzed by respondent location, there is a difference between the counties. At 78.7%, Henrico is 28 percentage points more (positive) than Chesterfield and 12

percentage points more than respondents from the City of Richmond. Richmond is much closer to the average overall response (see Table D6, Appendix D).

When this question is analyzed by respondent group there is virtually no difference. The widest gap is five percent between the Bridging Richmond and the PTA. All three groups are very close to the overall respondent averages (see Table D7, Appendix D).

Responder Comments about Regional Support

Respondents that answered positively frequently thought a regional school is something Richmond needs and said they are supportive of anything that increases opportunities for children to learn and grow socially and academically. Four respondents specifically noted STEM in their comments.

The more negative comments were that funding should not be diverted from local public schools, but that finances should instead be used to focus on improving existing schools. Respondents also felt strongly there would be a lack of support from the localities and from local leaders. Some of the more interesting comments included:

(1) "This type of education is what will elevate all youth in Richmond and beyond."

(2) "…residents of Richmond are very forward thinking and would relish the opportunity to have a regional school here. I believe the city would be proud to have a school such as this".

(3) "This would give them a true sense of what they will encounter socially…"

(4) "It's the city that desperately needs socio economic diversity in order to increase the quality of our schools."

(5) "…I would prefer to focus on making our comprehensive schools better rather than devoting considerable resources to establishing another regional school".

(6) "We need to spend funds on supporting the schools we already have, increase pay for teachers and focus on education for all students."

(7) "I do not believe Caucasians in the metro Richmond area would support a school that promotes diversity."

(8) "I think a great many in the Richmond area see diversity as a good, but associate racial minorities with impoverished and overstressed inner-city schools, where they might not want to send their children."

(9) "People either have no/little interest in regional collaboration…"

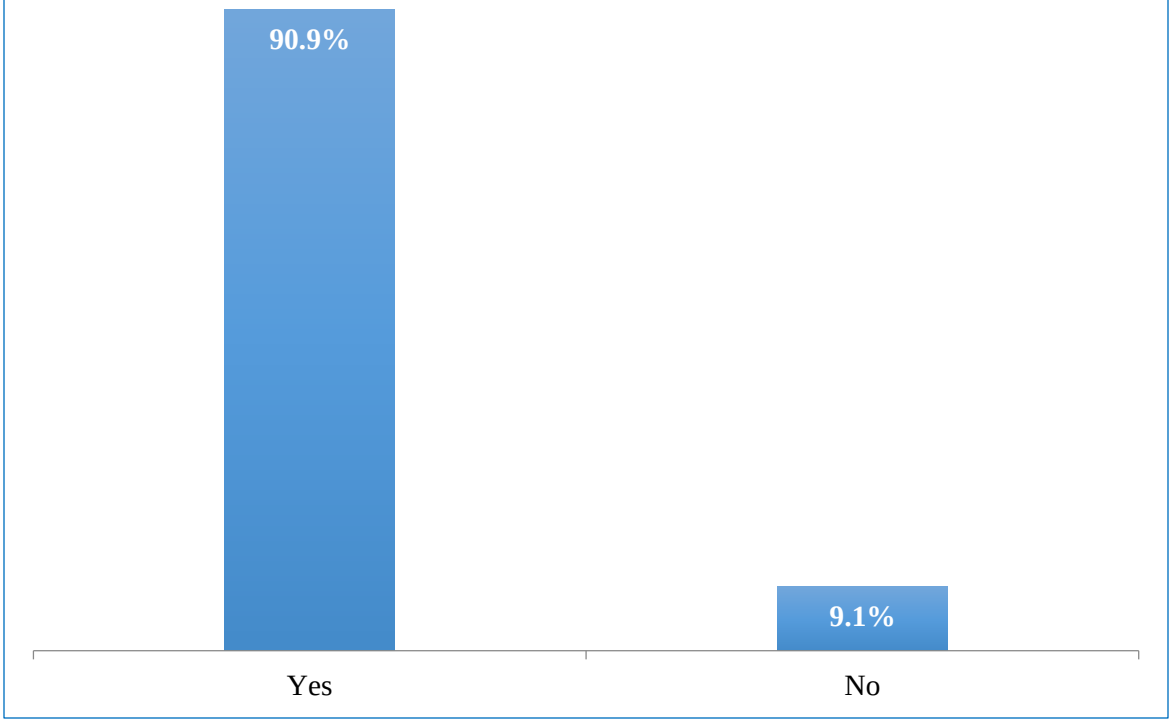
(10) "I do not support a plan that puts quotas or is not flexible in the determination of what is considered "diverse"."

Respondents had mixed views. Many took the time to offer support or give specific thoughts on how they thought additional funds should be used. There were passionate responses that were both positive and negative. This may lead to a lively debate should a regional school be proposed in the near future, though it should be noted, a wide majority of survey participants were supportive of regional cooperation and school diversity.

Support for a Regional School with a Program Focus and that Promotes Diversity

A majority of the respondents indicated that they would support regional efforts to establish a school with a clearly identified theme or focus as well as an emphasis on diversity (see Figure 9). Respondents were asked, more specifically would they support regional efforts to create a school with a program focus and that promotes diversity. The following examples of thematic programs were provided in the question: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math – STEM; Leadership Development; Arts, etc. In all, 90.9% of respondents indicated their support and 9.1% indicated they would not support this type of school.

Figure 9. Support for Regional School with Program Focus and Promotes Diversity (n= 230)



Source: Question 9, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013.

The survey indicated considerable support for a regional effort to create a school with a thematic focus and commitment to diversity. The survey results indicated high levels of support according to race, locality, and participant group affiliation. That being said, there were slight differences based on demographic data. There was a 6.3% difference between Blacks and Whites in the level of support favoring a regional school with a school theme and focus on diversity. Similarly, there is a 6.3% difference between the two racial groups in the lack of support, with Whites being less supportive than Blacks (see Figure D14, Appendix D).

Respondents that reside in the City of Richmond were definitively supportive of regional efforts to create a school with a thematic focus and emphasis on diversity with 89.3% indicating support. Henrico County respondents were unanimously in favor of collaboration and 86.7% of

the respondents from Chesterfield County were also in favor of regional cooperation on this endeavor (see Table D8, Appendix D).

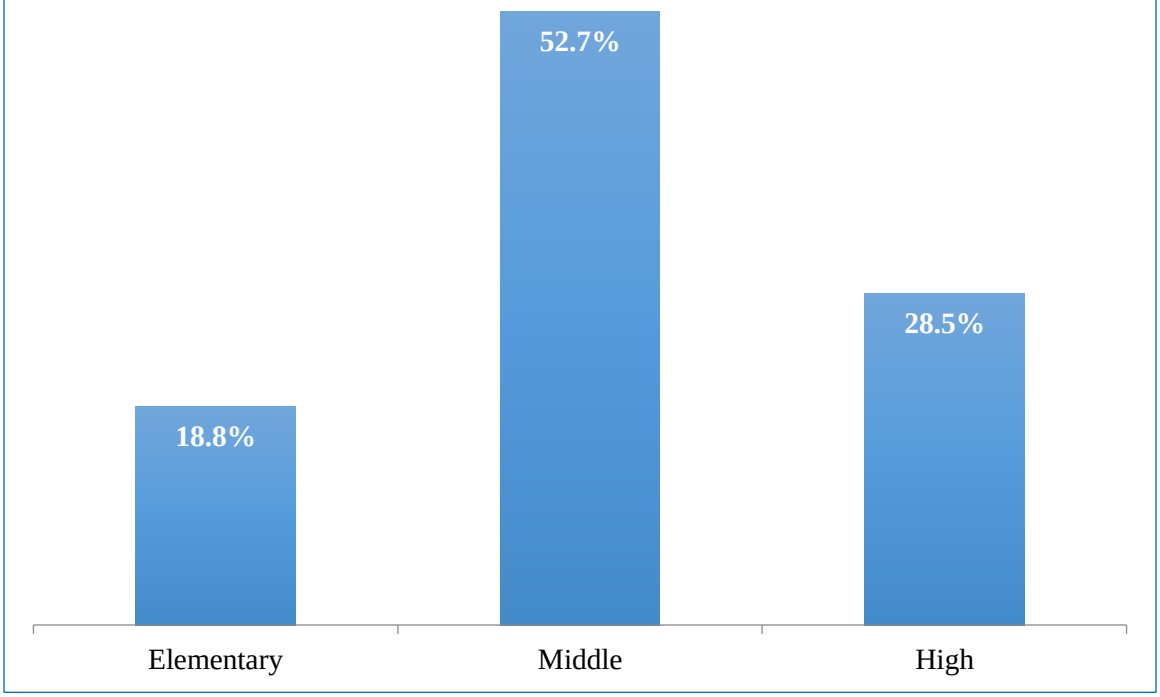
There was strong support from survey participants in all three localities in a regional effort to create a school with a program focus and that promotes diversity. The combined level of support among respondents from the City of Richmond, Henrico, and Chesterfield was 92.1%. Likewise, the respondents from all of the target participant groups were supportive of a regional partnership geared toward the creation of school with a program focus that also promotes diversity. The survey data revealed that 97.6% of Looking Back, Moving Forward, 82.4% of Bridging Richmond attendees, and 91.9% of PTA respondents supported this undertaking (see Table D9, Appendix D). The support for regional collaboration to create a school with a specific program focus and a commitment to promote diversity was irrefutable. Only 7.4% of the respondents were not supportive.

Theme 3: Preference for School Type and Program Focus

School Level for a New Regional School

The majority of the respondents expressed an opinion that a regional middle school would benefit the area most, with 52.7% selecting that option (see Figure 10). A regional high school was the second most popular option with 28.5% and elementary was the least popular with 18.8%. If an individual or group tried to start a school, it would be important to note what type and level of school would have the most support from the region.

Figure 10. Level of Regional School Most Beneficial to The Region (n=239)



Source: Question 4, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013.

When this question is analyzed by subgroups, the results are similar, giving middle school a clear preference across all demographic categories. There is a slight preferential difference when this question is analyzed to compare black and white respondents (see Table D10, Appendix D). While both groups had the middle school level as the greatest benefit, 47.8% of black respondents indicated middle school as their preference compared to 58.3% of white respondents. At the elementary level, 24.4% of Black respondents indicated that an elementary regional school would be the most beneficial compared to 15.5% of white respondents. Black and white responses for the high school level were less than two percent apart, at 27.8% and 26.2%, respectively.

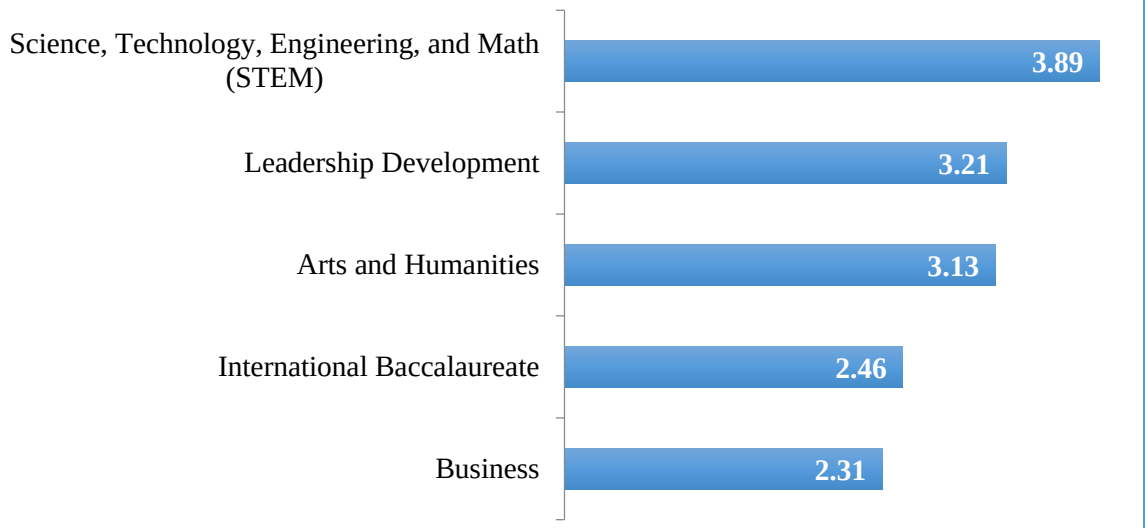
The respondents from the City of Richmond and Chesterfield County had a higher preference for the middle school option than the respondents from Henrico (see Table D11,

Appendix D). Sixty percent of the respondents from the City of Richmond indicated that a regional middle school would benefit the region the most. While 57.1% of Chesterfield respondents indicated the same opinion, that percentage dropped for the Henrico respondents to 44.3%. The three participant groups all indicated that a middle school level regional school would be most beneficial to the area (see Table D12, Appendix D). The Bridging Richmond group had 67.7% of their respondents indicate a preference for a middle school, with the other two groups' preference closer to 50%.

Thematic Focus of a New Regional School

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) was a clear leading interest for the region as a whole with the highest average ranking of 3.89 (out of 5). There is strong interest in STEM education in America (Holdren & Lander, 2010). This is highlighted by a PTA respondent who wrote, "STEM is the wave of the future to compete globally" (Regional School Survey, 2013). A school with themes of leadership development or arts and humanities had similar rankings with an average of 3.21 and 3.13 respectively. A regional school with a business theme had the least interest by the respondents with an average ranking of 2.31. Figure 11 shows the average ranking for 239 respondents who answered this question.

Figure 11. Interest in Thematic Focus of a New Regional School (n = 239)



Source: Question 5, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013.

STEM was the first choice for the region as a whole and it was also a clear preference for Black respondents. Black respondents favored the STEM theme as a first choice with 58.8% of respondents compared with 46.6% of White respondents (see Table D13, Appendix D). On the other end of the spectrum, each race had a clear choice for their least preferable option. Of the Black respondents, 33.3% chose International Baccalaureate (IB) as their least favorite. Black respondents may have a negative attitude toward IB because of historical inequities in admissions policies to IB schools. For many, IB schools are associated with admitting a disproportionate number of White, wealthy students (Kahlenberg, 2014). White respondents had an even clearer distinction with 43.7% of respondents choosing the business theme as their least favorite.

When analyzing support for a specific theme by locality, STEM again is a clear preference. Respondents in Henrico, the City of Richmond, and Chesterfield all chose STEM as the number one choice for a school focus (see Table D14, Appendix D). Over 60% of the

respondents in each locality indicated that STEM was either their first or second choice for a regional school theme. Chesterfield residents had a clear choice for their least favorite theme with 46.7% of respondents choosing International Baccalaureate as their least favorable option. The residents of the city of Richmond and Henrico chose the business theme as their least favorite option with 38.1% and 31.2%, respectively.

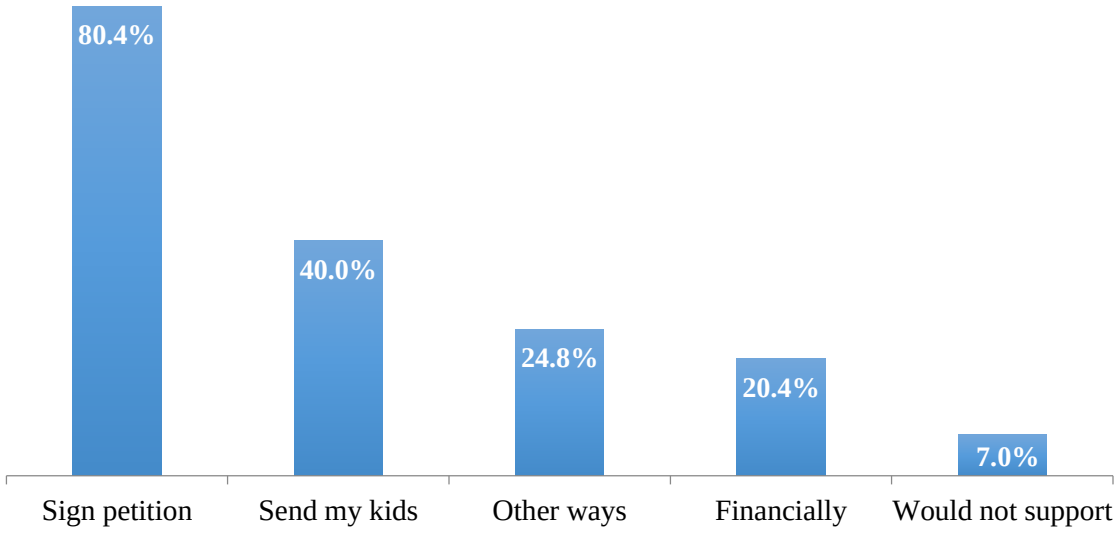
The breakdown by respondent group mirrors the overall trends for this question. Looking Back, Moving Forward, Bridging Richmond, and the PTA groups all indicate a preference for the STEM theme. The PTA group had the highest preference with 59.6% of respondents choosing STEM as their first choice. On the other end the spectrum, the least favorite choices again mirrored the overall trend. Looking Back, Moving Forward and Bridging Richmond indicated that the business theme was the least appealing with 44.6% and 38.2% of respondents choosing this as their least favorable option. Of the PTA group respondents, 41.4% chose International Baccalaureate as their last choice for a regional school theme.

Theme 4: Perceived Obstacles to Regional Cooperation

Types of Support

A majority of the respondents indicated that they would be willing to support the creation of a regional middle school and that they would be willing to support it multiple ways. Most respondents (80.4%) would sign a petition. Overall, 40.0% of the total respondents indicated they would send their children to this school. Interestingly, when analyzing responses by those with school age children, 60.1% would send their children to this school; while 24.8% would support in other ways (they wrote in a specific response); 20.4% would support the school financially; and 7.0% would not support the creation of this school (see Figure 12).

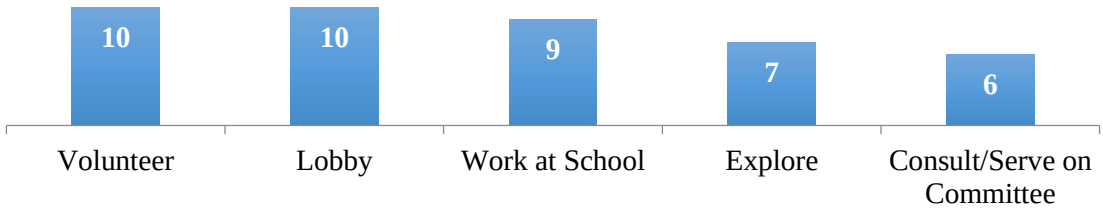
Figure 12. Types of Support Respondents are willing to Provide (n=230)



Source: Question 10, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013.

Respondents who chose to write in a specific response as to how they would support a regional school were overwhelmingly positive. Collectively, 50 responses were positive, while only two were negative. Three respondents were unsure or indifferent. See Figure 13 for a breakdown of the types of written-in responses.

Figure 13. Top Offers of Support from Positive Responders



Source: Question 10, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013.

When this question is analyzed to see the differences between Black and White respondents, the responses are similar (see Table D15, Appendix D). Only two categories stand at a difference greater than 4%. Twenty-eight percent of Blacks would be willing to support a

new regional school financially, while only 14.6% of Whites would do this. Additionally, 32.0% of the White respondents offered an additional way that they would support the school. Of the Black respondents, 13.3% did the same.

None of the respondents from Henrico would oppose the creation of a regional school whereas respondents from Chesterfield and the City of Richmond would. This may be a direct result of the fact that Henrico high schools all have specialty centers attached to each school. Students are able to apply for and attend those centers, regardless of where they live in the county. Transportation is provided for the students. Henrico residents can thus see the benefit of county-wide cooperation and increased opportunities for their children. This, perhaps, allows residence to understand and appreciate that regional cooperation may provide additional opportunities to benefit students. Furthermore, Henrico is now a majority-minority school system and the changing demographics may also influence the respondents' desire for greater school choice options ("Henrico county public," 2013). Respondents from Henrico are the most receptive in every category. Signing a petition and sending their children to this school remain the top two choices (see Table D16, Appendix D).

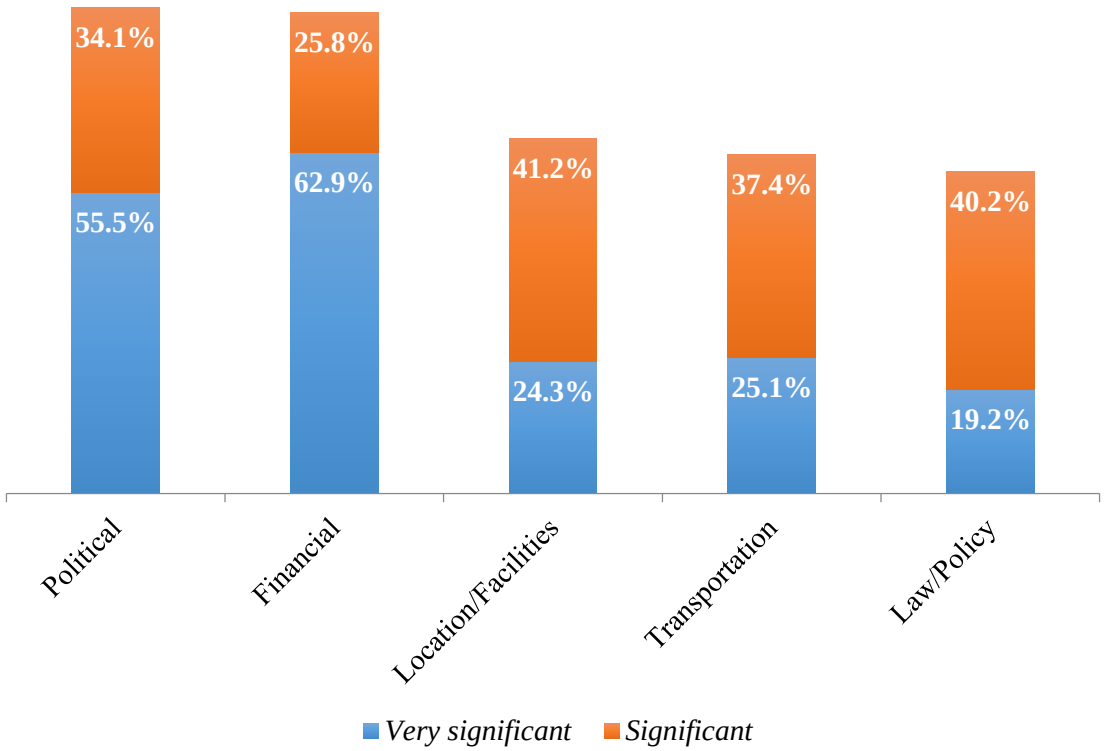
Looking at the data by group, respondents from the PTA group appear to be the most supportive. All groups show the highest support for signing a petition (see Table D17, Appendix D).

Most Significant Obstacles

Respondents felt there would be several obstacles to the creation of a regional school, but financial and political obstacles were voted by far the most difficult to overcome. In all, 62.9% of respondents rated financial as a very significant obstacle (see Figure 14). The second most significant obstacle is political at 55.5%. Looking at the significant and very significant

measures, when considered together, respondents rated financial at 88.7% and political at 89.6%. Respondents felt that law/policy was the least significant impediment to the creation of a new regional school. This may be due in part to the strong presence of local Governor's schools and the regional cooperation that is necessary for them to run effectively.

Figure 14. Perceived Obstacles to the Creation of a Regional School (n = 229)



Source: Question 12, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013.

Political and financial obstacles are also the most significant obstacles when comparing Black and White respondents, as they both responded by over 90% that politics and financial concerns were significant or very significant.

Respondents from all three localities rate finances to be a very significant and their highest ranked obstacle. Chesterfield rates it at an extremely high 80.0%, nearly 17% higher than Henrico and 25% higher than Richmond (see Table D18, Appendix D). Importantly, though,

respondents from the counties rank the obstacles similarly if significant and very significant are added together.

The Looking Back, Moving Forward group rates political as its highest rated “very significant” obstacle. Likewise, Bridging Richmond and the PTA identified finances to be their highest rated “very significant” obstacle. Table D19 (Appendix D) illustrates the overall high ranking for Financial and political obstacles across each group.

In Chapter 5, a summary of the conclusions drawn from the findings of both phases of this study will be discussed, as well as discussion of implications and recommendations for future research. Recommendations for future research will identify actionable steps that parents, school leaders, researchers, advocates, and potential regional school organizers might employ as a result of this study.

CHAPTER V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMENDATIONS

Introduction

The opportunity and achievement gaps among school divisions in the Richmond area are deeply rooted issues. Educational experts and researchers attribute these disparities in part to factors such as less qualified teachers, poor curricula, and inferior school facilities that are linked to racially and socioeconomically isolated schools (Siegel-Hawley, 2012). To close the student opportunity and achievement gaps related to economic and racial isolation in Richmond area schools, regional stakeholders need to advance educational equity and excellence. One potential solution is the creation of a regional school designed to promote diversity and provide equal educational opportunities across jurisdictions.

When students from diverse racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds attend school together, academic achievement and social development are enhanced for all students (Lee, 2007). Furthermore, students who attend racially and economically diverse schools are more adept at building meaningful relationships with peers from other social categories (e.g. racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, etc.), which is an essential skill in a pluralistic society with a changing demographic makeup (Frankenburg & Orfield, 2007). A regional school with a focus on racial and economic diversity could be a touchstone for closing opportunity and achievement gaps between disenfranchised and privileged students. However, the demand for school integration has confronted resistance for decades.

Inequities

In 1959, the Prince Edward County board of supervisors suspended operation of the entire public school system in response to federally mandated school desegregation. Although the precept that students of color and their White counterparts should be educated in “separate

but equal schools" has been mitigated, the vestiges of intensely segregated schools—with less than a 10% non-minority student body—are brutally apparent in the United States. These schools certainly are not models for cultivating the intellectual, social, and emotional well-being of racially and ethnically diverse youth, especially African-American and Latino males, who are disproportionately labeled, tracked, and disciplined within these schools (Orfield, 2012).

Implementable Strategies

While race relations have improved over the past sixty years, this study suggests that structural obstacles may have replaced more overt racial discrimination. Research shows that one of the major problems of 21st century education is the impact of racially and economically isolated schools on our society. Orfield et al. (2012) and Moss and Ossmet (2012) argue that this pressing issue results in a lack of intercultural cohesiveness, a racially and ethnically imbalanced teaching corps, high teacher attrition rates in school divisions with heavy concentrations of poverty, inadequate curricula to meet the academic, social and emotional needs of students, and unacceptable disparities in resources (e.g. infrastructure and technology). Attending a school with a diverse student population can significantly enhance academic achievement and intercultural competency (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2007).

A school that values diversity should also have specific curricula and experiences that build students' social cognition, which is the ability to effectively interact with people from different cultural backgrounds. Quality teachers who create high expectations for all students can provide the greatest constructive outcome for lasting positive social development (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). As teachers have the most profound influence on student achievement, cultural diversity training can help teacher education programs develop culturally

competent educators to meet the academic and social-emotional needs of students of color in American public schools.

Social Change That Benefits Marginalized Groups

To counteract the adverse effects of intensely segregated schools requires "a comprehensive school-wide commitment to eliminating prejudice and increasing intercultural competence" (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2007 p. 33). When the financial and political power of regional stakeholders coalesces around the creation of a regional middle school, the traumatic effects of racially and economically segregated schools can be transformed into an educational model where "school-level policies and practices make diverse schools and classrooms more effective than any other schools" (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2007, p. 32).

Recognizing the ongoing impact of the social ills related to segregation and the critical need to address them, the researchers explored the possibility, feasibility, and desirability of a regional school as one possible solution to create diverse learning environments. What follows is a summary and discussion of conclusions drawn from the findings of each research question. Conclusions drawn from research question one shows a narrowed list of school integration alternatives that specifically address racial and economic isolation in Richmond. Questions two and three look at the most feasible options for creating a regional school under current laws, legislation, and funding; and research question four identifies what type of regional school is most desirable and what the regional community thinks may be obstacles to its creation. This chapter also includes a brief discussion of the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

Approaches that Address Racial and Economic Isolation in Metro Richmond

Conclusions for Research Question 1

(RQ1) What are the national trends in and solutions to addressing issues of racial and economic isolation?

Research question one investigated the "possibility" aspect of the study. This question explored what school districts across the nation are doing—and how they are doing it—to address racial and socioeconomic segregation and how they are creating these diverse learning environments. A myriad of alternative solutions have been presented in this study. Some solutions address segregation within district boundaries, while others address segregation across district boundaries. The school integration approaches presented in this section combine to create a solid framework for combating segregation across school division boundaries in Richmond and surrounding areas.

The growing racial and socioeconomic segregation occurring among school division boundaries in the Richmond metro area has become a recent concern for national and local researchers, educational practitioners, policymakers, advocates, parents, and community members. Since 1989 for example, White students have made up 10% or less of the enrollment in Richmond and Petersburg schools; and, almost one in ten Black students attended apartheid schools where non-minority students made up less than 1% of the enrollment (Siegel-Hawley et al., 2013). This illustrates the point that Richmond City schools—and similar urban schools in the region—lack a diverse student-body within its own boundaries to effectively address the racial and socioeconomic isolation. Thus, an inter-division or regional solution is most likely to reverse the segregation occurring across school division lines.

The researchers are proposing a regional middle school as one possible solution to address the resurgence of racial and socioeconomic isolation occurring across school division boundaries in the Richmond area. Creating a regional school to combat segregation and to promote diversity requires a multi-dimensional approach, incorporating at least three of the alternative approaches outlined previously in the research findings.

First, the school must create special programs or develop curriculums that strategically draw upon a larger, more diverse pool of students of different racial groups and socioeconomic status from across division boundaries. These special programs may serve as an incentive to attract Whites and more affluent families to attend the school.

The case studies presented earlier provide successful examples of the use of specialty programs by school districts to draw students across school boundaries to support diversity efforts. In the first case study, the Denver Schools of Science and Technology initiative uses a STEM-focused, project-based learning curriculum to draw students from across the City of Denver to attend middle and high school charter schools. Omaha Public Schools, characterized in the second case study, joined an 11-district regional cooperative, which utilizes magnet schools centered on visual and performing arts, math and technology, in part to achieve socioeconomic diversity. The third case study, and probably the most notable, is Connecticut's Inter-district Magnet Schools program. This voluntary inter-district cooperation among several school districts was specifically designed to reduce racial and economic isolation by offering a high quality, specialized and thematic curricula to draw a diverse student body student.

The type of specialty programs and curricula offered in these case studies represent what is possible and a prerequisite for attracting a racially and socioeconomically diverse student body for a regional school in metro Richmond.

The second alternative integration approach that will ensure a successful creation of a regional school is multi-division cooperation. This will provide a framework for regional collaboration among adjacent or surrounding school divisions with dissimilar racial demographics. Multi-division collaboration may take many forms and could mean different things depending on the historical, political, legislative, and geographic context of the region. In Connecticut and Omaha, neighboring school districts came together in a collaborative manner to combat racial and economic isolation and to create diverse learning environments. The Learning Community formed by the 11-member districts in Omaha created a governing body comprised of elected officials and a superintendent from each district, and used a shared property tax formula for participating counties to finance school operations.

The third alternative integration approach needed to aid the creation of a Richmond area regional school is student enrollment or student assignment policy. This school integration factor is important because it determines how and which students will be enrolled in the school, and helps to ensure the level and type of school diversity desired. Student assignment policies may incorporate "race-conscious" or "race-neutral" elements to achieve diversity. Race-neutral factors may include, but not be limited to, a family's income or parent's education level, a students' neighborhood and prior academic performance or a combination thereof. If school organizers choose to incorporate race-conscious policies, those that consider individual student characteristics, they must comply with the Supreme Court ruling in *Parents Involved*.

The school districts in each of the case studies utilized a type of open enrollment plan to admit students, and in some cases, to achieve their intended goals for diversity. The DSST charter schools, for example, employ the use of a weighted open enrollment lottery plan. Their student enrollment process favors the economic status of a neighborhood to achieve a level of

socioeconomic diversity that more closely mirrors the district as a whole. On the other hand, in Connecticut, the inter-district magnets use a lottery-based open enrollment policy, but race (or any other factor) is not used as determinate for admissions. Inter-district magnets in Connecticut are designed to achieve racial and economic diversity voluntarily and solely by attracting a diverse student body with an offer of a themed, high-quality curriculum. Finally, the open enrollment student assignment plan utilized by the Learning Community in Omaha is designed to attain socioeconomic diversity by accounting for a student's free or reduced lunch status.

In order for a regional school to achieve a level of racial and socioeconomic diversity that organizers intend, these three alternative integration methods—a school's focus, its reach, and the type of students admitted—should be taken into account. This includes careful consideration and flexibility to modify these factors in any way to cater to the particular demographic character of the region or community for which they are designed. These specific alternatives, and others the researchers deemed important in the metro Richmond context, will be discussed next. That conversation summarizes the list of school choice options in Virginia which can best incorporate the integrative features make possible a regional middle school focused on diversity.

A Regional Middle School Solution for Metro Richmond

Conclusions for Research Questions 2 & 3

(RQ2) What federal, state, and/or local legislation impacts the creation of a regional middle school?

(RQ3) What are the potential funding sources for creating a regional middle school?

Research questions two and three probed whether or not the creation of a regional middle school is feasible. Put differently, these research questions ask: Does Virginia law allow it and is there funding? In the law and policy findings, a better understanding was gained of the

intersection or implementation of federal, state and local laws—and subsequent funding sources—which lay the groundwork for creating and sustaining a regional middle school in Virginia.

Upon initial evaluation of the current Virginia school options, four public school choices have the most potential to be a regional school solution: charter, magnet, Governor's, and college partnership laboratory schools. To further narrow the list of contenders, the researchers have developed a set of attributes (based upon research assembled from this study) that are vital for a regional school to exist, and to effectively reduce racial and social isolation and promote diversity.

A potential regional school should possess or incorporate the following attributes:

- A framework for regional cooperation (Does Virginia law/legislation allows this school to operate inter-divisionally or regionally?).
- A program focus or specialty to draw students from across school division boundaries.
- A student enrollment policy or process that is equitable and aligned with a diversity plan.
- A capacity to implement a curriculum that encourages and promotes the interaction of students with different racial/ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic status creating diverse learning settings.
- Diversity or student integration as part of its mission.
- Professional development and diverse learning opportunities (DLOs) for administrative staff, teachers, and students.

- A lottery or other mechanism that has no restrictive screening or competitive testing for admissions.
- The capacity to implement an outreach program or communication process to inform and include underserved minority groups.
- Transportation services to all students.
- A secure or steady funding stream for startup and sustained operations.
- A governing body to manage school policy, operations, and funding.

The next step toward selecting a final choice for a regional middle school was to compare the four remaining selections against the aforementioned criteria. Figure 15 summarizes potential school choice options in the Commonwealth and helps to illustrate advantages and disadvantages of each. These represent possibilities for a regional school with the potential to create exemplary diverse learning environments.

Figure 15. Comparison Matrix of Advantages and Disadvantages of VA Regional School Options

Regional School Criteria	Charter Schools	Magnet Schools	Governor Schools	Laboratory School
School Structure and Attributes				
1. A framework for regional cooperation	Advantage	Advantage	Advantage	Advantage
2. Possess a program focus or specialty	Neutral	Advantage	Advantage	Neutral
3. Possess an equitable student enrollment policy or process aligned with a diversity plan	Neutral	Advantage*	Disadvantage	Neutral
4. Has a curriculum that encourages cultural interaction	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
5. School goals embedded with diversity	Disadvantage	Advantage*	Disadvantage	Neutral
6. Provide professional development and diverse learning opportunities	Disadvantage	Neutral	Disadvantage	Neutral
7. No restrictive screening or competitive admissions	Advantage	Advantage	Disadvantage	Advantage
8. Has an outreach program or communication plan	Neutral	Advantage*	Disadvantage	Neutral
9. Provides transportation services to all families	Disadvantage	Advantage*	Disadvantage	Neutral
10. A regional (or otherwise) governing body	Advantage	Advantage	Advantage	Advantage
School Funding Attributes				
11. Reliable funding sources for startup	Advantage	Advantage	Advantage	Advantage
12. Reliable funding sources for sustained operations	Advantage	Neutral	Advantage	Neutral

**Note: Required for and tied to MSAP grant funding.*

A discussion of each school option relative to their cumulative advantage, disadvantage or neutral value ratings led to the researchers' recommendation. A "Neutral" rating means that a

final decision to incorporate a parameter in school operations or policies is left to school organizers. A charter school is not an ideal choice for a regional middle school focused on diversity because charter school laws in many states, Virginia included, do not contain provisions to enforce diversity as a part of school operations (Frankenburg & Siegel-Hawley, 2009). This is reflected in value ratings of neutral or disadvantage on most all attributes associated with diversity. Additionally, when looking at charter schools across the regional transportation attribute, a rating of "Disadvantage" is assigned because charter school transportation has not been tested on a regional level.

For many of the same reasons as charter schools, Governor's schools would not be a viable option as a regional school promoting diversity. Furthermore, the attribute value ratings for Governor's schools are relatively worse than charter schools when compared to the diversity of student enrollment, competitive admissions, and outreach attributes. Charter schools are rated better than Governor's schools on the outreach attribute because the school organizers for a regional charter school could decide to incorporate an outreach program. Furthermore, Govenor's schools have competitive admissions process that is built into their school policies.

College partnership laboratory schools are a relatively new school option in Virginia. There is currently no longitudinal data to support their effectiveness and therefore is not recommended by the researchers. Planning funds were allocated under former Governor McDonald. At this time, the current governor has not yet renewed these funds. No long-term, sustainable funding is part of this grant. However, it will be worth keeping an eye on laboratory school legislation to see if funding is renewed by the current administration.

The most viable choice for a regional middle school promoting diversity is a public magnet school. Nine out of twelve attributes were assigned the "Advantage" value rating under

this school option, almost twice the value rating of the next closest option—charter schools. Magnet schools are notable for their ability to draw students from across neighborhood attendance zones and school division boundaries. This is because they usually possess a special school program, curriculum, or theme. And, unlike Governor Schools, magnet schools may exist at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels. Magnet schools' historical focus on school integration and civil rights protections were factors contributing to the favorable ratings for attributes 3, 5, 8, and 9.

The funding for magnet schools presents both an opportunity and challenge for school organizers and potential governing boards. Federal MSAP grant funding is typically a great source for magnet school startup funding. The MSAP funding ensures school organizers make diversity more explicit throughout school operations and reduces the chance that organizers or governing boards do not abandon diversity/integration measures or programs due to a lack of funding. However, reliance upon MSAP grants for long-term use could prove to be problematic. Federal magnet grant funding is awarded on a competitive basis on a three year cycle.

A regional magnet school with a governing body consisting of stakeholders from across the region could offer a more sustainable funding source. Within this framework, cooperating school divisions would provide per-pupil or a proportional share of funding based upon the number of students that come from the respective school divisions. In addition to federal grant funding and the potential for shared revenue, magnet schools may receive funding through private or public donations, partnerships, and fundraising.

Magnet schools possess all of the critical elements or attributes the researchers believe are necessary to create diverse learning environments. A side-by-side comparison with other viable school options makes the case for magnet schools. With its original goals to balance

school enrollment across racial lines, and the many options for school funding, magnet schools are the natural choice for a regional school that promotes diversity.

The Desirability of a Regional Middle School in Metro Richmond

Conclusions for Research Question 4

(RQ4) Is there regional support to create a regional middle school?

Economically and racially diverse schools have positive effects on students' lifelong earning potential, health, and overall success (Johnson & Schoeni, 2011). An important first step to helping Richmond's most racially and economically isolated schools is to take the pulse of the region to determine if there is willingness to work together to provide better opportunities for all students. The final research question examined metro Richmond's level of support for a regional school and their opinions about such a school. Organizers of a regional school will have to educate the public as to the merits of an inter-district school focused on diversity, but it is important to get a sense of perceptions as a baseline for what the region might want and support. A survey (see Appendix B) was designed in order to better understand the level of desirability for a regional school.

The researchers found strong support to create a regional middle school focused on diversity. Over 90% of the respondents indicated that racial and socioeconomic diversity were at least "Somewhat Important" factors when selecting a school for their own child. There are some differences in perceptions across certain demographic subgroups. For example, Blacks felt stronger about diversity than Whites. This will be a recurring theme throughout the survey responses, as Blacks seem to place a slightly greater value on diversity than Whites. Regional school organizers may want to study this trend further to determine the reasons behind these perceptions.

The region has a positive outlook on diversity in schools, which is an important starting point for regional dialogue. Respondents indicated that diversity is important, but it seems that the majority of respondents feel diversity is more important for students' social development than their academic success. This is contrary to what research indicates and will need to be emphasized in the community outreach that would go along with the creation of a regional school.

This regional school will need to be an incubator for best practices and ideas focused on explicitly teaching the values of diversity and cultural competency. It may be important for school organizers to be clear in their mission that this school is about more than just diversity. This school should value innovative teaching methods that reach children of all levels, from all walks of life.

In addition to gauging perceptions of the importance of diversity to students' success, the researchers tried to gauge the region's perception of support for a regional school. Over 90% of the respondents indicated that they would support the creation of a regional school. A follow up question asked how the respondents felt the people they associate with would feel about this type of school. The positive response rate decreased to 80%. This difference between survey respondents and the people with whom they associate is going to be a key factor in the success of a regional effort because residents without school age children and individuals who are not engaged in the education process have influence over city and county elected officials. Regional school organizers may want to emphasize the regional benefits of a better educated, more diverse student body. The economic impact of student dropouts and poorly educated students was thoroughly discussed in the literature review. The economic impact could be a selling point as

fiscally conscious citizens commented that they do not want to see their tax dollars cross jurisdictions.

There were three interesting trends about support for a regional school that potential organizers may want to take note of. First, Black respondents again showed greater support for a regional school. Second, 100% of Henrico respondents indicated their support. This will be important because support from the two neighboring counties, Henrico and Chesterfield, will be vital to the creation of a regional school. Lastly, the PTA respondents had the greatest level of support for a regional school across the three respondent groups. The regional PTA is a strong voice and carries considerable political weight and they will be an important ally if this effort is to move forward.

The researchers then tried to gauge what level of school would be most beneficial and what curricular focus might the region support. Survey respondents indicated that they felt a regional middle school would be most beneficial. Of the 239 respondents, 52.7% indicated the region could benefit from a middle school. Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) was the top ranking choice for a thematic focus according to respondents. Leadership Development and Arts and Humanities were also highly regarded. Black respondents felt stronger about a STEM theme than Whites, with 58.8% vs. 46.6% choosing STEM as their first choice. Blacks are underrepresented in STEM fields and there may be a belief among Black respondents that they would like to see that addressed with the next generation of children. This could be a key selling point as STEM is a field that has traditionally lacked women and minorities (Lee, 2014). The researchers also see value in combining STEM and the arts as a way to create a more diverse curriculum that would consider divergent learning styles and multiple intelligences.

The final phase of the survey attempted to gauge the perceived obstacles to regional cooperation. The majority of respondents indicated they would support the creation of a regional school focused on diversity. By a two to one margin, respondents indicated they would support such a school. Over 80% of respondents indicated they would sign a petition in support of a regional school. Of the respondents with school age children, 60% would send their own children to such a school. Fifty-two people took the time to comment on additional ways they would like to support a regional school. Fifty of those responses were positive while only two were negative. Popular among respondents were offers to teach, volunteer, or be part of a planning committee. There was a particular interest in STEM education among those responses.

In attempting to gauge respondents' perceptions of obstacles to creating a regional school, a clear theme emerged. The respondents indicated that political and financial considerations were the greatest obstacles to the creation of a regional middle school. This held true across all demographics. In order for a regional school focused on diversity to come to fruition, it is going to take political will and a financial commitment by the entire region. Organizers of the school will want to emphasize the economic and social benefits of having great schools throughout metro Richmond. Organizers will also want to emphasize that many of the proposed options for a school come with built-in state and federal funds. As this study has noted, there are many funding sources available, especially in the initial startup phase.

Limitations of this study

As stated in the Methodology section of this paper, several limitations of the study were identified. The survey population of the study garnered 250 responses but was non-random, so the findings may not be necessarily generalized to the metro Richmond area population; survey participant perceptions were based on subjective self-reporting; and the use of an online survey

instrument may have presented a technical challenge for some participants. Additionally, because category choices were labeled differently, the survey was set up in such a way that limited data analysis for particular comparisons. The survey may have been improved if the survey choices were consistent. For example, the researchers chose to use Likert scales for some questions and a ranking system for others. Additionally, the word "significant" should not be used as part of the answer choices, as there is the potential to confuse the reader when discussing statistical significance. Finally, a larger respondent group may have assisted in better understanding some of the lesser-represented subgroups.

Given these limitations, the survey had a high response rate (state the rate) from three local, influential groups that are directly involved in education and policy. The findings of this survey will be very useful as the metro Richmond region explores creating regional school solutions.

Recommendations for future evaluations.

Follow up research could be strengthened by collecting a more representative sample and by including more respondents. Possible partnerships with schools, school divisions, and businesses could offer more valuable insight into regional perspectives. Additionally, once the type of regional school is chosen**,** future researchers should consider exploring how best to weave students' intercultural competency and diversity training for teachers into the curriculum. The faculty and student body should not only be diverse, but should have the opportunity to learn about diversity and how to work with and learn from diverse populations. Research that provides best practices on how to introduce this knowledge to a school would strengthen the possibility of a successful regional school that values diversity.

Conclusion

The research clearly indicates that all students benefit from diverse learning opportunities. When the economic and political roots of de facto apartheid education are severed, the public will no longer accept the disenfranchisement of Black and brown students, predictably ranked on the bottom of standardized test measures. The creation of a regional middle school with an emphasis on diversity can positively impact student achievement (Frankenburg & Orfield, 2007, p. 39) and serve as a model for best practices in the development of intercultural competency among students, teachers, and administrators. The researchers understand that the creation of a single school may have a limited impact on the region, but it is an important first step that could lead to the development of a replicable model to scale up across the region.

Based on the findings of this study, the capstone team recommends that regional stakeholders should further explore the creation of a regional magnet school at the middle school level. Furthermore, the team believes that the region has an ideal opportunity to take advantage of funding available in the 2016 MSAP grant cycle. With regional support for one or a series of schools with a program focus (e.g. STEM, Arts, etc.) and an emphasis on diversity, the Richmond region is poised to be a model for school districts around the country facing similar issues. Our research supports that the creation of a middle school with a program focus and an emphasis on diversity is possible, feasible, and desirable.

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APPENDIX A

Research Study Timeline

Components	Description	Actual Time
Literature Review	**Phase I**	**34 Weeks**
Social Science Research		***18 weeks***
Articles	Scholarly Journals	7/1 – 8/31
Books	Experts in the field	7/1 – 11/1
Documents	Nat'l Studies and Reports	8/1 – 8/31
Case Studies		***26 Weeks***
Denver	Public Charter School	8/25 – 2/21
Omaha	Multi-District Consolidation	8/25 – 2/21
San Francisco	Open Enrollment	8/25 – 2/21
Connecticut	Inter-district Magnet Schools	8/25 – 2/21
Institutional Attributes		***15 Weeks***
Laws	Legal Statues	11/18 – 2/28
Policies	Federal, State, Local	11/18 – 2/28
Funding	Federal, State, Local	11/18 – 2/28
Quantitative Data	**Phase II**	**17 Weeks**
Survey		***8.5 weeks***
Doctoral Students	VCU School of Ed	11/18 – 12/6
Participants	LBMF	12/9 – 1/15
Participants	BRMSS	12/9 – 1/15
Parents	Local PTA groups	12/9 – 1/15
Data Analysis		***6 weeks***
Analyze Survey Results	Disaggregate data	1/15 – 2/24
Interpret Findings	Evaluate data	2/10 – 2/25
Recommendations		**6.5 weeks**
Executive Summary	Synopsis of Study	2/19 – 3/19
Presentation to Client	Executive Summary	4/1
Capstone Defense	Technical Document	4/2
Publication		**3 weeks**
Revisions	Final Edit	4/7 – 4/18
Submission	VCU/SOE (Electronic Version)	4/21 – 4/25
Distribute	Client & Director (Hard Copy)	4/28 – 5/2

Note: Actual time for phases does not equal time for sub-phases due to overlaps.

APPENDIX B

Regional School Survey

Introduction

The following 24 question survey is seeking information from parents, community leaders, national and local researchers, educational practitioners, policy makers, and other advocates about their preferences on how a regional school (a school drawing students across school districts within metro Richmond) should be structured, perceptions of diversity, and hurdles to regional cooperation. Your participation in this survey is voluntary, your responses will remain anonymous, and it will take you no longer than five minutes to complete. No identifying information will be collected.

This survey is being conducted by a team of doctoral students from Virginia Commonwealth University's Educational Leadership program on behalf of the organizers and Strategic Committee of the "Looking Back, Moving Forward" Conference on school diversity and equity. If you have questions about this survey, please contact Brian Maltby at: maltbyba@vcu.edu.

Perceptions of School Diversity (Section 1)

1. How important do you believe racial diversity is for: (Select one choice per row)

	Very important	*Important*	*Somewhat important*	*Not at all important*
Students' success	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not at all important
Schools' success	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not at all important
Social development	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not at all important

2. How important do you believe socioeconomic diversity is for: (Select one choice per row)

	Very important	*Important*	*Somewhat important*	*Not at all important*
Students' success	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not at all important
Schools' success	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not at all important
Social development	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not at all important

3. In selecting a school for my child, how important is racial and socioeconomic diversity? Please skip this question if you have no school age children. (Select one choice per row)

	Very important	*Important*	*Somewhat important*	*Not at all important*
Level of Importance	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not at all important

Type of School/Program Focus (Section 2)

4. What level of regional school do you feel would be most beneficial to the area?

- ○ Elementary
- ○ Middle
- ○ High

5. What thematic focus of regional school would interest you most? Please rank (1 to 5).

(1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) Humanities and Arts
(1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) International Baccalaureate
(1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) Business
(1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM)
(1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) Leadership

6. How important do you believe the following characteristics are to school success? (Select one choice per row).

	Very important	*Important*	*Somewhat important*	*Not at all important*
Quality Teachers	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not at all important
Diversity	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not at all important
Strong Leadership	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not at all important
Strong Curricula	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not at all important
Parent Engagement	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not at all important

Levels of Support/Obstacles to Regional Cooperation (Section 3)

7. Would the majority of the people with whom you associate support the creation of a new regional school?

   - Yes
   - No

8. Would you support the creation of a new regional school?

   - Yes
   - No

9. More specifically, would you support regional efforts to create a school with a program focus (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math -STEM, Leadership Development, Arts, etc.) that promotes diversity?

   - Yes
   - No

10. How might you be willing to support a new regional school? Select all that apply.

    - Financially
    - Send my kids to this school
    - Sign a petition to help create school
    - I would not support
    - Other (please explain below)

Please explain here.

11. Do you believe the metro Richmond area would support the creation of a new regional school with a program focus (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math -STEM, Leadership Development, Arts, etc.) that promotes diversity?

    - Yes
    - No

Please specify here.

12. What do you perceive as the most significant obstacles to the creation of a regional school? Please rate.

	Not Significant	*Somewhat significant*	*Significant*	*Very significant*
Political	Not Significant	Somewhat significant	Significant	Very significant
Financial	Not Significant	Somewhat significant	Significant	Very significant
Transportation	Not Significant	Somewhat significant	Significant	Very significant
Location/Facilities	Not Significant	Somewhat significant	Significant	Very significant
Law or Policy	Not Significant	Somewhat significant	Significant	Very significant

Demographic Information (Section 4)

13. Do you currently have a school age child/children? If no, please skip to question 16.

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

14. If you answered yes to previous question, what level of school do they attend? Select all that apply?

- ○ Pre-K
- ○ Elementary
- ○ Middle
- ○ High

15. What type of school does your child/children attend? Select all that apply?

- ○ Regular Public School
- ○ Private
- ○ Charter
- ○ Specialty Center (e.g. IB)
- ○ Specialty School (e.g. Governor's)
- ○ Home School
- ○ I have no school age children

16. Please select your age range.

- 0-21
- 22-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70 and above

17. With which racial/ethnic group do you most identify?

- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Black/Aftrican-American
- Latino(a)/Hispanic
- Middle Eastern
- Indigenous/Native American
- White
- Multiracial
- I prefer not to answer this question

18. How do you identify yourself?

- Male
- Female
- Other

19. What is your highest level of education completed?

- Some high school
- High school diploma
- Some college
- Associate's degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree

20. Where do you currently reside?

- ○ Chesterfield
- ○ City of Richmond
- ○ Other (please specify below)
- ○ Hanover
- ○ Henrico

Please specify here.

21. What is your zip code?

Please specify here.

22. I attended:

- ○ The Looking Back, Moving Forward conference
- ○ The Bridging Richmond Middle School Summit
- ○ Both
- ○ Neither

23. Do you think regional cooperation between local school divisions is important to improve school diversity in the Richmond metropolitan area? Why or why not?

Please explain here.

24. Thank you for taking time to complete this survey. Please share any thoughts you have about the survey, school diversity, and/or regional cooperation.

Please explain here.

APPENDIX C

Maggie Walker Governor School Race Enrollment Tables

Table D1

Maggie Walker (All Districts) Percent Students Applying and Selected, 2001-2012

	Average % of Students **applying** each year	Average % of Students **selected** each year
White	55.7	74.3
Black	25.6	6.9
Asian	12.0	12.8
Hispanic	2.7	2.1
American	0.3	0.2
Mult-Ethnic	3.7	3.7
Total	*100.0*	*100.0*

Source: Maggie Walker Coordinator of Admissions.

Table D2

Maggie Walker (All Districts) Acceptance Rate by Race, 2001-2012

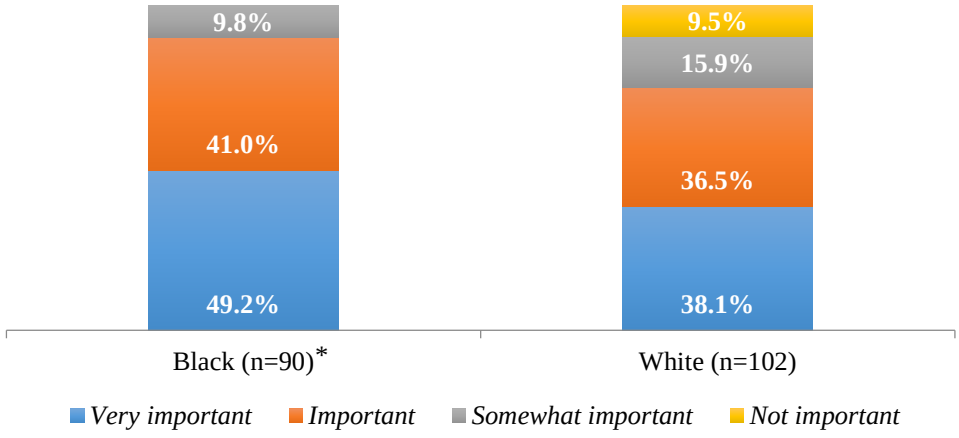
	Average % of Students **applying** each year
White	23.8
Black	4.9
Asian	19.1
Hispanic	13.8
American	10.5
Mult-Ethnic	17.8
Total	*17.9*

Source: Maggie Walker Coordinator of Admissions.

APPENDIX D

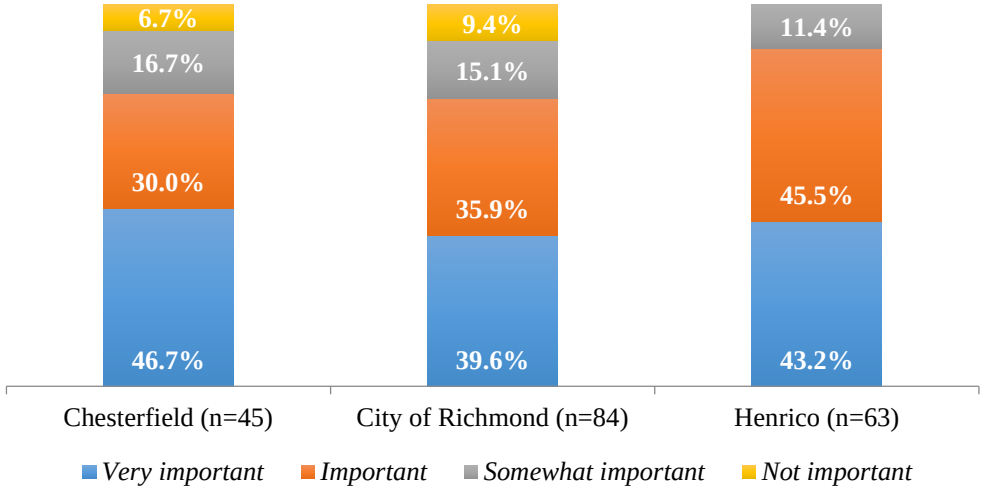
Survey Results Charts and Tables

Figure D1. Importance of Racial & Socioeconomic Diversity when Selecting a School for my Child



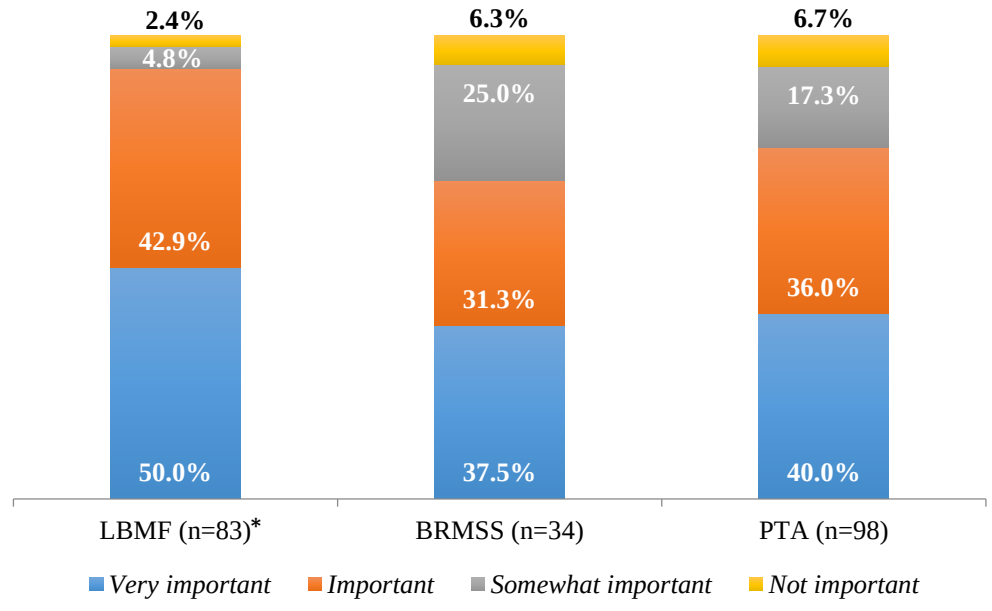
Source: Question 3, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013.
**p*=0.044.

Figure D2. Importance of Racial & Socioeconomic Diversity when Selecting a School for my Child



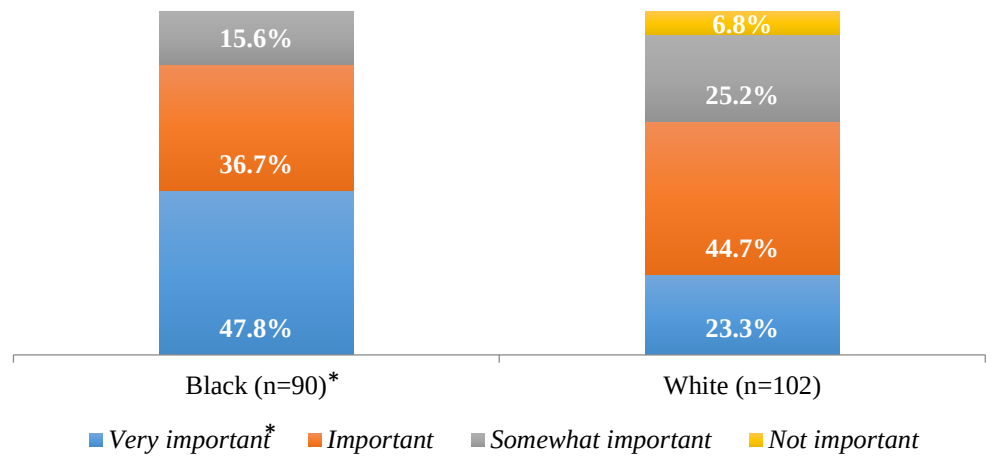
Source: Question 3, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013.

Figure D3. Importance of Racial & Socioeconomic Diversity when Selecting a School for my Child



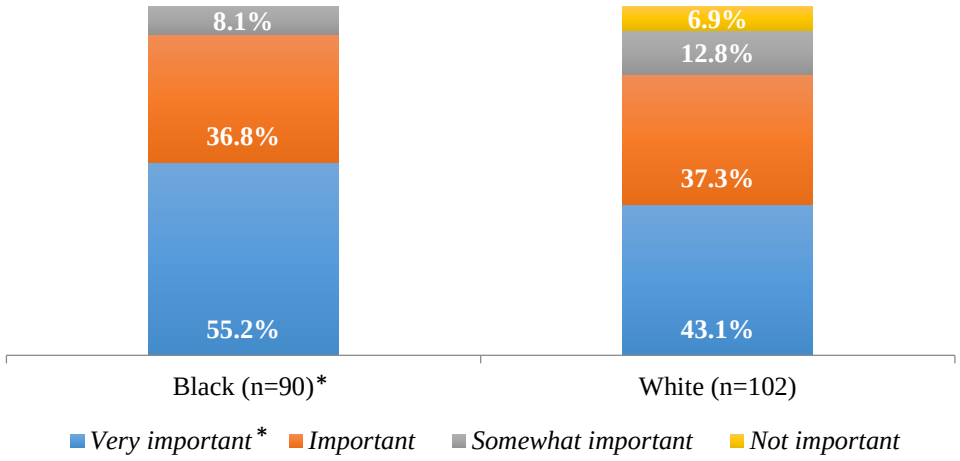
Source: Question 3, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013.
**p*=0.000.

Figure D4. Importance of Racial Diversity to Students' Academic Success



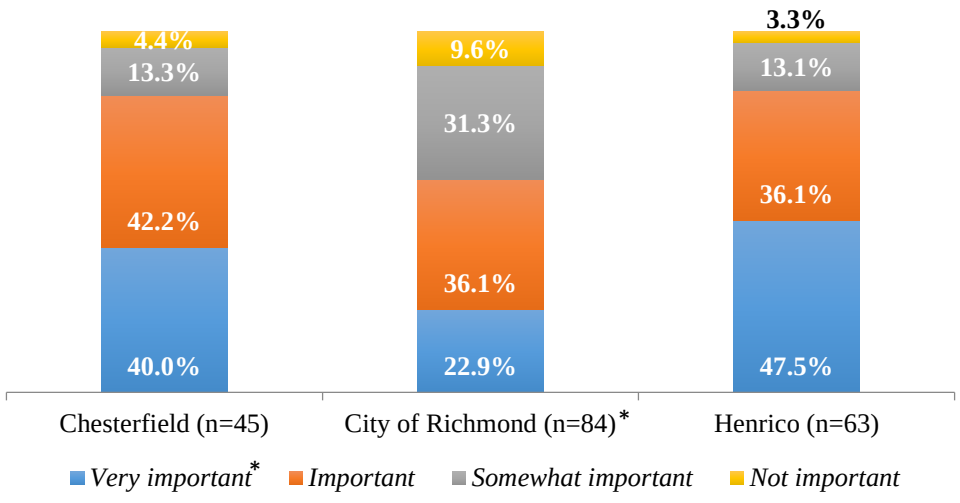
Source: Question 1, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013.
**p*=0.000.

Fugure D5. Importance of Racial Diversity to Schools' Overall Success



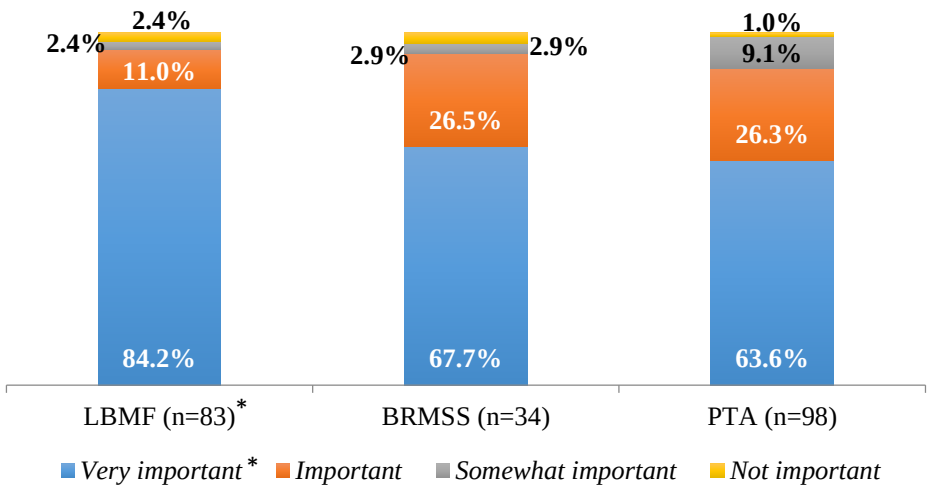
Source: Question 1, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013.
**p*=0.000.

Figure D6. Importance of Racial Diversity to Students' Academic Success



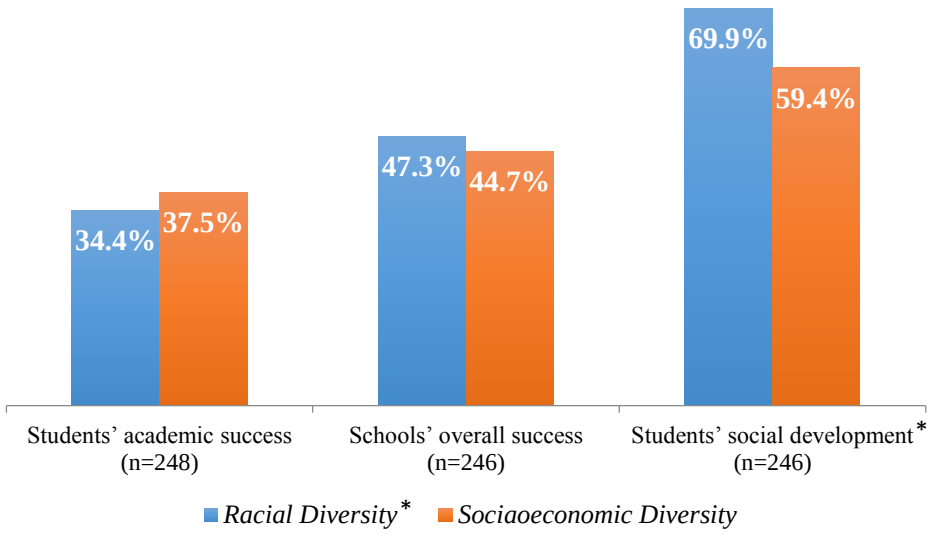
Source: Question 1, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013.
**p*=0.001.

Figure D7. Importance of Racial Diversity to Students' Social Development



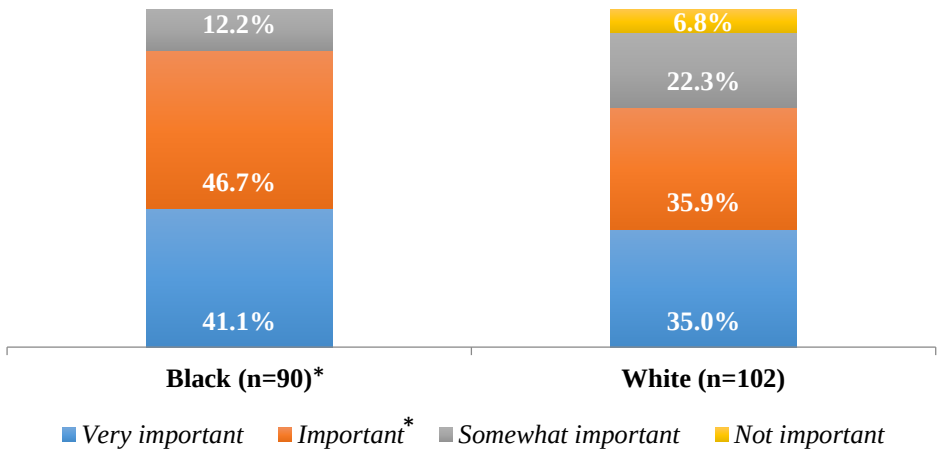
Source: Question 1, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013.
**p*=0.013.

Figure D8. A Comparison of Racial and Sosioeconomic Diversity on the "Very Importnat" Measure



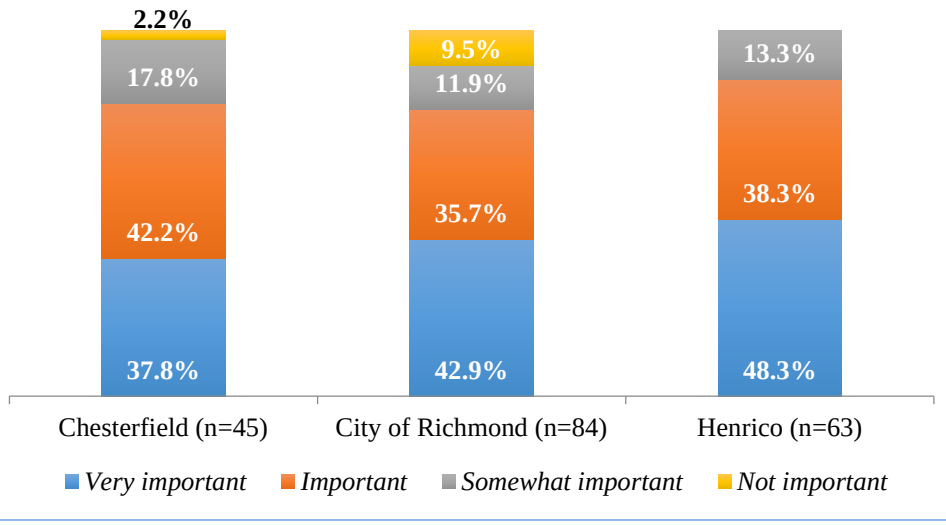
Source: Question 2, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013.
**p*=0.009.

Figure D9. Importance of Socioeconomic Diversity to Students' Academic Success



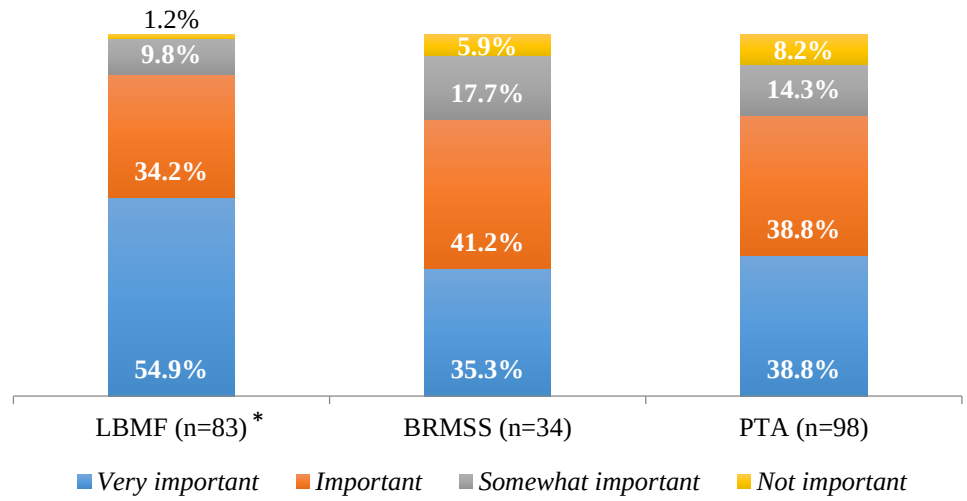
Source: Question 2, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013.
*p=0.030.

Figure D10. Importance of Socioeconomic Diversity to Schools' Overall Success



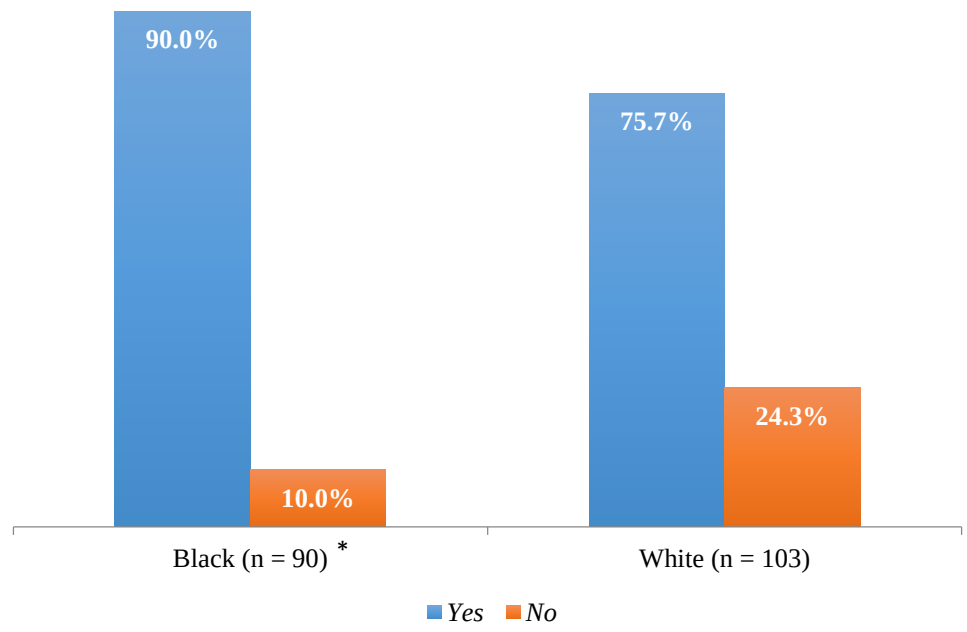
Source: Question 2, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013.

Fugure D11. Importance of Socioeconomic Diversity to Schools' Overall Success



Source: Question 2, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013.
**p*=0.017.

Figure D12. Respondants' Associates Support Creation of a Regional School by Race



Source: Question 7, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013.
**p*=0.009.

Table D1

Importance of the Diversity Characteristic for School Success by Locality

	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important	Total Respondents
Chesterfield	4.44%	4.44%	28.89%	62.22%	45
City of Richmond	7.14%	11.90%	46.43%	34.52%	84
Henrico	0%	8.20%	40.98%	50.82%	61

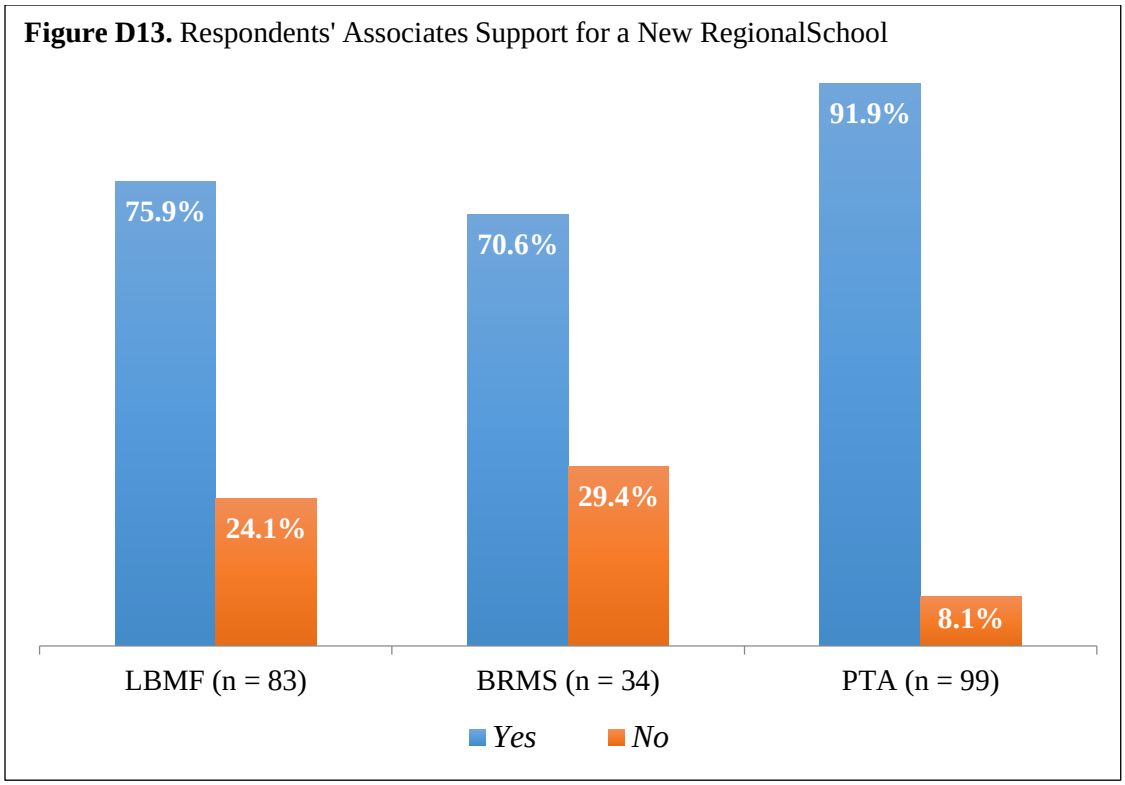
Source: Question 6, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013.

Table D2

Respondents' Associates Support for a New Regional School

	Yes	No	Total Respondents
Chesterfield	71.1%*	28.9%	45
City of Richmond	86.9%	13.1%	84
Henrico	83.6%	16.4%	61

Source: Question 7, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013.
*p=0.029.



Source: Question 7, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013.

Table D3

Respondent Support for a New Regional School by Race

	Yes	No	Total Respondents
Black	95.6%	4.4%	90
White	92.2%	7.8%	103

Source: Question 8, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013.

Table D4

Respondent Support for a New Regional School by Locality

	Yes	No	Total Respondents
Chesterfield	84.4%*	15.6%	45
City of Richmond	94.1%	5.9%	84
Henrico	100.0%	0.0%	61

Source: Question 8, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013.
*p=0.001.

Table D5

Perceptions of Support for a New Regional School with a Thematic Focus that Promotes Diversity by Racial Group

	Yes	No	Total Respondents
Black	73.3%	26.7%	90
White	66.0%	33.9%	103

Source: Question 11, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013.

Table D6

Perceptions of Support for a New Regional School with a Thematic Focus and that Promotes Diversity by Region

	Yes	No	Total Respondents
Chesterfield	51.1%	48.9%	45
Richmond	66.7%	33.3%	84
Henrico	78.7%	21.3%	61

Source: Question 11, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013

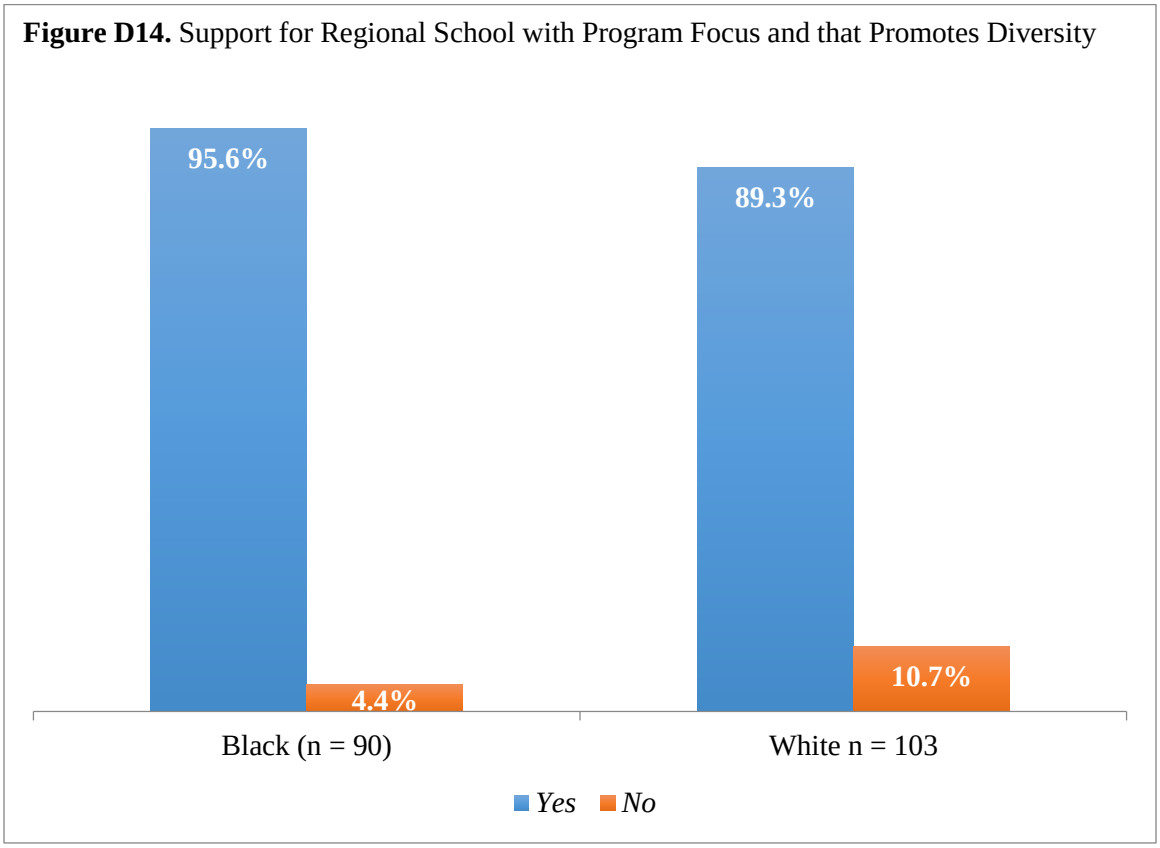
Table D7

Support for a New Regional School with a Thematic Focus that and that Promotes Diversity by Respondent Group

	Yes	No	Total Respondents
LBMF	67.5%	32.5%	83
BRMSS	64.7%	35.3%	34
PTA	69.7%	30.3%	99

Source: Question 11, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013

Figure D14. Support for Regional School with Program Focus and that Promotes Diversity



Source: Question 9, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013

Table D8

Support for Regional School with Thematic Focus and that Promotes Diversity by Residence

	Yes	No	Total Respondents
Chesterfield	86.7%	13.3%	45
City of Richmond	89.3%	10.7%	84
Henrico	100.0%	0.0%	61

Source: Question 9, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013

Table D9

Support for Regional School with Thematic Focus and that Promotes Diversity by Respondent Group

	Yes	No	Total Respondents
LBMF	97.6%	2.4%	83
BRMSS	82.4%	17.7%	34
PTA	91.9%	8.1%	99

Source: Question 9, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013

Table D10

School Level Preference for Regional School by Race

	Elementary	Middle	High	Total Respondents
Black	24.4%	47.8%	27.8%	90
White	15.5%	58.3%	26.2%	103

Source: Question 4, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013

Table D11

School Level Preference for Regional School

	Elementary	Middle	High	Total Respondents
Chesterfield	20.0%	60.0%	20.0%	45
City of Richmond	16.7%	57.1%	26.1%	84
Henrico	21.3%	44.3%	34.4%	61

Source: Question 4, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013

Table D12

Level Most Beneficial to Area by Respondent Group

	Elementary	Middle	High	Total Respondents
LBMF	20.5%	51.8%	27.7%	83
BRMSS	14.7%	67.7%	17.7%	34
PTA	21.2%	48.5%	30.3%	99

Source: Question 4, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013

Table D13

Theme: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Choice by Race

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	Total Respondents
Black	58.8%	8.8%	10.0%	11.1%	11.1%	90
White	46.6%	21.4%	15.5%	9.7%	6.8%	103

Source: Question 5, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013

Table D14

Theme: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Choice by Locality

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	Total Respondents
Chesterfield	55.6%	8.9%	17.8%	13.3%	4.4%	45
City of Richmond	51.2%	14.3%	15.5%	10.7%	8.3%	84
Henrico	49.2%	18.0%	6.6%	14.8%	11.5%	61

Source: Question 5, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013

Table D15

Ways to Support a New Regional School by Race

	Financially	Send kids there	Sign petition	Would not support	Total Respondents
Black	27.8%	44.4%	84.4%	4.4%	157
White	14.6%	40.8%	81.6%	6.8%	181

Source: Question 10, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013

Table D16

Ways to Support a New Regional School by Locality

	Financially	Send kids there	Sign petition	Would not support	Totals Respondents
Chesterfield	20%	33.3%	77.8%	11.1%	69
Richmond	14.3%	41.7%	82.1%	7.1%	146
Henrico	31.2%	54.1%	88.5%	0.0%	117

Source: Question 10, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013

Table D17

Ways to Support a New Regional School by Respondent Group

	Financially	Send kids there	Sign petition	Would not support	Totals Respondents
LBMF	19.3%	33.7%	84.3%	2.4%	149
BRMSS	5.8%	26.5%	73.5%	17.7%	48
PTA	27.3%	51.5%	82.8%	5%	179

Source: Question 10, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013

Table D18

Perceived Obstacles to Create a Regional Middle School by Region

	Not significant	Somewhat significant	Significant	Very significant	Totals Respondents
Obstacle: Political					
Chesterfield	0.0%	6.7%	37.8%	55.6%	45
Richmond	0.0%	11.9%	35.7%	52.4%	84
Henrico	1.7%	10%	26.7%	61.7%	60
Obstacle: Financial					
Chesterfield	0.0%	4.4%	15.6%	80%	45
Richmond	5.9%	13.1%	28.6%	52.9%	84
Henrico	0%	3.3%	33.3%	63.3%	60

Source: Question 12, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013

Table D19

Perceived Obstacles to Create a Regional Middle School by Respondent Group

	Not significant	Somewhat significant	Significant	Very significant	Totals Respondents
Obstacle: Political					
LBMF	1.2%	2.4%	39.8%	56.6%	83
BRMSS	0%	20.6%	29.4%	50%	34
PTA	1%	11.2%	29.6%	58.1%	98
Obstacle: Financial					
LBMF	3.6%	14.5%	26.5%	55.4%	83
BRMSS	0%	8.8%	26.5%	64.7%	34
PTA	3.1%	3.1%	23.5%	70.4%	98
Obstacle: Political					
LBMF	1.2%	2.4%	39.8%	56.6%	83
BRMSS	0%	20.6%	29.4%	50%	34
PTA	1%	11.2%	29.6%	58.1%	98
Obstacle: Financial					
LBMF	3.6%	14.5%	26.5%	55.4%	83
BRMSS	0%	8.8%	26.5%	64.7%	34
PTA	3.1%	3.1%	23.5%	70.4%	98

Source: Question 12, Regional School Survey (Appendix B), 2013

APPENDIX E

Matrix of School Options in Virginia – Choices for or in support of a Regional Middle School

Type of School Choice	***Description/ History***	***Policy/ Legislation***	***Emphasis/ Impact on Diversity & Student Achievement***	***Governance***	***Funding Sources***
Inter-district Open Enrollment Policies *(Particularly, urban-to-suburban or visa-versa policies)*	Inter-district open enrollment policies allow students to transfer to another school across district lines; Has historically been used to stem the effects of racial segregation and promote integration across district boundaries.	*Federal:* none; State: State and local policies determine implementation; Generally state-specific mandated or voluntary policies; Local cooperating school districts may develop voluntary policies; *State:* VA has no policies.	Can foster racial/SE integration with participation from/with surrounding school districts; Use of this type of policy or program without civil right protections (e.g., transportation) or integration goals may increase segregation.	Governed by state education agency and/or cooperating local school districts.	Primary funding is through state grants or local school budgets; Limited funding through the federal Voluntary Public School Choice (VPSC) program offering 5 year competitive grants.
Charter Schools *(Inter-district or regional models)*	Independent public schools free from many state and local rules; they are nonsectarian, open to all students, tuition-free, and subject to state and federal accountability standards; Minnesota ratified the first charter in 1989.	*Federal:* under ESEA as Charter Schools Expansion Act; State and local charter policies determine implementation; *State:* VA has six public charters schools with enrollment totaling 685; all serve students within division boundaries.	Mixed results regarding impact on student achievement, and a disturbing trend toward racial and socioeconomic segregation; There is a general lack of basic civil rights policy in state charter legislation.	Charters may be started by local school boards or other groups; Non-division applications are submitted to State Board of Education for approval; controlled by a management committee/board; VA law allows for a regional (inter-district) charter.	May receive per-pupil funding (PPF) from state and local sources; Fundraising; Charitable donations; Federal Charter School Program (CSP) and state grants.

Type of School Choice	***Description/ History***	***Policy/ Legislation***	***Emphasis/ Impact on Diversity & Achievement***	***Governance***	***Funding Sources***
Magnet Schools *(Inter-district or regional models)*	Largest system of school choice in the U.S.; Possess a special program or compelling mode of instruction to attract different families, thereby increasing the diversity of the student population within them; Students apply to be admitted, but at no cost; first emerged in the 1960's as a way to desegregate school districts and resolve educational inequity based on demographics or geography.	*Federal:* Magnet School Assistance Program (MSAP) was born out of Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA) in 1976, and continued funding under Education for Economic Security Act of 1984, provides funding to districts interested in opening magnet schools to further the goals of desegregation; *State:* No inter-district magnets currently exist in VA.	Magnet programs have evolved over time and now lead a movement promoting both educational equality and excellence; Originally designed to balance school enrollment across racial lines and incorporate civil rights protections.	*Inter-district:* Similar to the establishment of a regional charter school, an inter-district magnet school could be created by any individual, group, or organization, and controlled by a management committee/board.	Federal funding available through the Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP) grant (a to desegregation plan must be submitted with the grant application; Funding could be provided by participating school districts; and private sector (corporate) and community partners are also sources;
Private Schools	Independent or non-public schools not administered by local, state or national governments; Select their students and charge students tuition; Date back to 18th century and first established by missionaries of the Roman Catholic Church in FL and LA.	Federal: none; State: Virginia law allows for the Virginia Board of Education to accredit non-public schools at the request of the individual school. This process is done through the Virginia Council for Private Education.	Have a legacy of being segregation academies that were an all-white schooling alternative to integrated schools; Generally lacks diversity, and tuition costs make it a limited choice for Blacks and other minorities.	Would be run through an individual or board as a non-profit entity or a for-profit venture.	May be funded through a combination of tuition, private and corporate donations, and scholarships. Students may use Virginia's new tax-credit scholarship to supplement tuition.

Type of School Choice	***Description/ History***	***Policy/ Legislation***	***Emphasis/ Impact on Diversity & Achievement***	***Governance***	***Funding Sources***
Governor's Schools	A form of specialty school with "magnet school elements" as they attract talented or "gifted" students from various parts of the state, but with no diversity goals; Offers opportunities in visual and performing arts, science and technology, and government and international studies; Students gain admission upon successful completion in competitive application process.	*Federal:* none. *State:* Established under Virginia law (Code of Virginia or COV, Section § 22.1-26) which provides a framework for the establishment of regional or joint schools.	Have a track record of student academic success, but lack diversity and limit student acceptance due to enrollment policies that do not take race or socioeconomic status and a competitive application process.	These schools, with the consent of the State Board of Education, may establish regional governing boards comprised of representatives from the school boards of each participating school division. These governing boards are tasked with the developing admissions and other policies for the schools.	Funded through a mix of VA General Assembly funds and a proportional share from local school divisions.
College Partnership Laboratory Schools	Public schools funded by public monies and governed by the organization with authority given by the state board of education; Tuition free and uses a lottery based admission.	Federal: none; State: Chapter 26 of the COV (Section § 23-299.1-10), titled "Establishment of College Partnership Laboratory Schools."	Data not yet available to determine academic impact; Although lab school goals do not specifically reference racial or economic diversity, the lottery based admissions process could ensure diversity.	A public/private university must sponsor a school; A board set up by the sponsoring institution would establish and govern these schools.	A one-time planning grant through VDOE; School could accept grants, donations, and receive state and federal funds allocated for special education programs and personnel.