INTEGRATION IN DPS

Integration in DPS in Recent Years

- There are a number of ways of looking at integration and segregation in schools. There is not one clear definition of an integrated school and integration can involve both the diversity of the student body and the equitable experiences of students of different backgrounds. Using a variety of different measures, the level of integration in DPS has varied substantially in recent years, although trends over the past 10 years are generally towards more diverse student bodies and a greater focus on diverse teaching staff and culturally responsive education.

Overall trends

- In 2006, 70% of Hispanic students were in schools that were 90%+ non-white. In 2018, that figure had decreased to 63%
- In 2006, 55% of Black students were in schools that were 90%+ non-white. In 2018, that figure had decreased to 43%
- However, the share of White students in schools that were 70%+ white increased over the same time period, from 14% in 2006 to 23% in 2018.

Federal approach to integration

- The Federal Government Accountability Office (GAO) designates schools as segregated if they are less than 10% or greater than 90% free and reduced lunch (FRL).
- The Federal approach also designates schools as integrated if they are between 25% and 75% FRL.
- With district-wide FRL ranging from 67% to 72% over the past ten years, a DPS school does not have to vary substantially from the district average to be designated segregated. However, the GAO definition provides a simple and clear measure of segregation.
- Using that definition, in 2006 9% of DPS students were in segregated schools and 46% were in integrated schools.
- By 2009, after the recession and growth in DPS’ overall FRL population from 64% in 2006 to 71%, the share of students in segregated schools had increased to 40% and the share in integrated schools had decreased to 33%.
- However, over the past 10 years, the share of DPS students in segregated schools has decreased from 40% to 31% and the share in integrated schools has increased from 33% to 36%.
Initiatives to promote integration:

- DPS has taken a number of steps to support integration in its schools over the past decade.
- School Choice, with unified enrollment systems and timelines, was launched in 2012. It can support integration in the right contexts, but that is not a certain outcome of those policies.
- According to the A+ Colorado’s Denver’s Next Journey report on School Choice, "The structure of enrollment policies, including a unified enrollment system, can act as levers or constraints to impact integration; the extent of the impact remains a question in Denver."
- In 2011, DPS created the first enrollment zones, which offer families the right to attend one of a number of schools instead of a single boundary school.
- Enrollment zones can support integration if they are effectively designed to be demographically diverse and if families’ choices result in integrated schools. DPS’ experience has been mixed, with some zones effectively supporting integration, some having limited impact and others resulting in less integrated schools than would result with a boundary system.
- In 2015 DPS started a program to prioritize the enrollment of FRL students in high demand schools. This program is effective in schools that have wait lists and in schools that accept students from outside of their boundary or enrollment zone. In 2019, 1,091 students were placed in schools based on an FRL priority during Round 1 of School Choice.
- DPS has also found that students who enroll later in the school year are more likely to qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch. To that end, it is one of the only districts that holds back seats during enrollment to ensure that late-arriving students have access to high-demand schools. In 2019, 231 late-arriving students were served by this program.
- Significant efforts have been made over the last several years to recruit diverse pools of teaching candidates and to ensure that curriculum is culturally responsive to the experiences of our diverse student body. What happens inside the classroom is just as important as the demographics of the students in the building, and DPS has focused on building both facets of high-performing, integrated schools.