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Fwd: Stanford Project connects schools' success with SES

1 message

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Fri, Oct 4, 2019 at 7:38 AM

October Board Meeting

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From: **State School News Service** <j.m.broadway74@gmail.com>
Date: Fri, Oct 4, 2019 at 2:00 AM
Subject: Stanford Project connects schools' success with SES
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Volume 25, Number 57, October 4, 2019

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Project connects schools' success with SES

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, Illinois School News Service

There's an interactive graphic site that will keep you glued to it all weekend. It's the Educational Opportunity Project and it's based at Stanford University. This presentation will keep you bouncing around a bit, so you'll find it easier to navigate if you *view it on a computer or tablet*, rather than on your phone.

Ready? Okay, here we go. [This page reflects every school district in the country](#). Each appears as a bubble, sized according to enrollment and positioned according to socioeconomic status (poorest on the left) and according to students' academic achievement (students scoring most above grade level toward the top).

Yes, the page highlights the achievements in Chicago, which we talked about last week - and we will again today. But please notice the positions of the poorest districts (far left). Hover your cursor over the largest bubble there. It is Detroit. Now, hover over the little bubble that's *above and a tad to the left* of Detroit.

Right. That's East St. Louis District 189 (where I attended from the first grade). This part of the page is labeled "Average Test Scores, Grade 3." See that East St. Louis and Chicago are *similarly positioned regarding third grade students' scores*, even though East St. Louisans are much poorer, on average, than Chicagoans.

Now, watch what happens as you scroll down the page. By Grade 4 scores, you'll see Chicago move upward a bit, while East St. Louis dips down closer to Detroit's

position. By Grade 5, Chicago is up again, closer to the national average, while East St. Louis has fallen so it now touches the top-left of the Detroit bubble.

Scroll down the page. By Grade 6, Chicago's bubble is up again. It nearly touches the national average line. But East St. Louis is farther down, clinging to the lower left side of Detroit's bubble. By Grade 7, Chicago's bubble has finally pierced the national average, while East St. Louis has fallen into a deep hole.

Finally, Grade 8. Chicago students' scores are near the national average, while East St. Louis scores are down there with those of the ten or so worst-performing districts in the nation. It is an excellent outcome for Chicago. What it says about East St. Louis is pretty dismal. It's a case calling out for some serious study.

"The families in Chicago's public schools tend to be lower in socioeconomic status, and the average test scores are relatively modest," authors of the project wrote, "but, year after year, the schools are lifting children up at an impressive rate." Chicago Public Schools truly deserve some applause.

Now, the page that will hold your attention the longest, and *may even keep you up at night*, is [this one](#). From here you can see the measures of (1) Test Scores, (2) Learning Rates and (3) Trends in Test Scores - for the entire United States. Blue gradients are bad, low scores; white is average; green is above average.

See that the bluest (worst scores) concentrations are in southern and western states. No big surprise. Illinois has pockets of blue, most of it light, and a lot of white and pale green, punctuated by dark green (wealthy areas), mostly in northern Cook County and the collar counties, especially Lake, DuPage and McHenry.

Look for the word "**Showing**" on the left above the map. That line gives you many options. Click the symbol after "in U.S." and choose the "**Illinois**" option. From there you can hover over any Illinois district - *including yours* - and see its statistics. The symbol after "by School District" gives you "School" or "County" options.

But it is the symbol **after "all students"** that *gives the most variety*. You can look at statistics for just white students, just Black students, just girls, just boys, just poor students or "non-poor" students. You can choose to view achievement gaps between white-Black scores, or white-Hispanic, poor and non-poor, male-female.

Choose the "White/Black gap" option. That charts the gap in each district between scores of white and Black students in blue gradients; the deeper the blue, the wider the gap. The map also has a lot of grey areas, which means there is no gap there - probably because there are few or no Black students there.

As you move your cursor down the left side of the "**Map Legend**" you will see a link marked "**Show Interactive Chart.**" Click that. Now you can see two charts. One shows you the districts' white-Black gap as it relates to test scores above or below grade level. The other shows you the gap as it relates to socioeconomic status.

The correlation between academic performance and SES is stunning - *as is the correlation between Blackness and poverty*. There are exceptions, of course, but as a general thing poverty = low academic scores and Blackness = economic stress. The test scores are *not the cause* of the poverty - they are *an effect* of it.

The "achievement gap" has frustrated policymakers for as long as ISNS has existed (25 years), probably forever. The cure for this gap *has been sought in the schools* - with almost total disregard to the [out-of-school factors](#) (OSFs) that seem truly to be causally related to the gap. The graphic displays of this gap are grim.

Every profound truth has its deniers. Climate change. Evolution. Moon landing. Obama's citizenship. All have deniers. And so does one of the most documentable of all American truths: white privilege. There are myriad facets of this reality, but today we will focus solely on those relating to financial resources.

Okay, [here are the charts](#). It is true that the page title refers to "wealth inequality," which is a characteristic of America across the board. But *at the bottom of the board* you will find, as always, "people of color," Black and Hispanic citizens. White supremacy is *not a recent invention* in America.

What do the charts say? The first one merely documents the growth in wealth (as distinguished from income) inequality. "In 1963, families near the top had six times the wealth (or, \$6 for every \$1) of families in the middle," the research says. "By 2016, they had 12 times the wealth of families in the middle."

The "families in the middle" were generally getting by during the half-century charted. It's the families at the bottom who had no wealth to speak of; in fact, they were commonly in perpetual debt. Were most of those folks from the same race? You know it. Exceptions abound, but Black families have accumulated the least.

Income levels drive a family's wealth accumulation ability. As Chart 2 shows, the annual income of "families near the top increased roughly 90% from 1963 to 2016, while the income of families at the bottom increased less than 10%." The top incomes have grown most since the 1980s; the other levels, not so much.

The rest of the charts document the racial resources divide: wealth gap, lifetime earnings, home ownership, retirement savings. There's one category in which Black Americans are "in the lead"; they have the highest "student debt." As the final chart shows, much inequity is a direct result of white-tilted federal policy.

Now, *you don't have to believe all this*. That's one of the great things about being an American. You can believe anything you want to believe, no matter how outlandish; and you can disbelieve the most obvious and documentable facts. That is your right. Intellectual honesty is not a requirement for American citizenship.

Finally, it is important to note that [poverty is also common in rural areas of America](#), even where folks are mostly white. This fact is occasionally charted, but rarely so. Rural areas were very slow to recover from the Great Recession (if in fact that have recovered by now). Current trends make it tough for them.

Teachers' tone of voice suggests CTU will strike CPS. After all that positive stuff about Chicago Public Schools teachers "lifting children up at an impressive rate," it seems clear that the Chicago Teachers Union and their labor allies are likely to go out on strike in a couple of weeks. The bargaining is not working.

The school board has offered what Mayor Lori Lightfoot calls a "generous" pay increase of 16% over five years. But CTU President Jesse Sharkey has called that an attempt to "buy us off" and avoid negotiations dealing with class sizes, school nurses and other needed supports for students and similar non-pay issues.

The [CTU members voted this week to authorize a strike](#) that could begin on October 17. It would involve not just teachers but also security guards and teacher assistants, as well as Chicago Park District employees. CPS CEO Janice Jackson and Lightfoot have told parents that [school buildings will be open](#) if that happens.

The Chicago-based [Raise Your Hand](#) organization has posted excellent information on the possible strike, emphasizing that having a date set does not mean there will be a strike - while urging "both sides to take every measure possible to avoid a strike." Chicago subscribers are advised to *stay linked to RYH*.

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