

**RISE OF MAJORITY-MINORITY DISTRICTS IN RURAL IOWA: HOW CHANGES IN  
MEATPACKING IMPACTED RURAL SCHOOLING**

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## **RISE OF MAJORITY-MINORITY DISTRICTS IN RURAL IOWA: HOW CHANGES IN MEATPACKING IMPACTED RURAL SCHOOLING**

### **Abstract**

This study analyzes several rural school districts in the state of Iowa that have experienced relatively sudden demographic shifts in recent years with schools shifting from an almost totally white, English speaking population to a continually growing number of Hispanic and ESL/LEP students. Moreover, all of these districts are located in communities that are home to slaughterhouses; changes in the meatpacking industry have brought many Hispanic families to these communities. Both qualitative and quantitative data was gathered including observations, interviews, enrollment, and achievement figures. This study found the presence of an achievement gap, variation in LEP/ELL programs, occurrence of white flight, and great deal of power held by the slaughterhouses in these districts. However, the fact that these districts continue to become more majority-minority, in essence segregated, is the most pressing issue found in these districts. I then discuss the implications of this segregation and review the policy options available to address it. I recommend a hybrid option of forced consolidation with community schools.

## Overview

Iowa has an estimated 152,000 Hispanic individuals who compose roughly 5% of the state's population (U.S. Census 2010). Additionally Hispanic children constitute only 5% of the state population, but represent 9% of all K-12 students in the state's education system (NCES Common Core Data). In the 2009-2010 school year, Iowa had almost 39,000 Hispanic students in its public school system, an almost 800% increase in the proportion of Hispanic students in the state since 1987-1988 (NCES Common Core Data). Furthermore, the number of Hispanic students should continue to increase in the coming years.

In seven districts, more than a third of their students enrolled are classified as Hispanic students: Columbus Junction, Denison, Marshalltown, Perry, Postville, Storm Lake, and West Liberty (NCES Common Core Data). All of these districts shifted from totally white, English speaking populations to a more diverse group of students, Hispanic students being the largest. Although only educating 3% of the total enrollment in public schools in the state, these districts educate 17% of the Hispanic (NCES Common Core Data). All of these districts experienced these demographic shifts because their communities contain slaughterhouses. Various economic factors resulted in the slaughterhouses recruiting minority populations to staff these factories in these small towns in recent years.

Historian Wilson Warren in his book *Tied to the Great Packing Machine* (2007) argues that the history of slaughterhouses in the United States contains four main development phases in the Midwest: Merchant Wholesaling (1820-1865), Terminal Marketing (1865-1950), Early Direct Buying (1920s-1950s), and Modern Direct Buying (1960-2000). In the most recent phase, Direct Buying, slaughterhouses moved from locating in urban regional centers to isolated rural communities. This phase started with the construction of the IBP (Iowa Beef Processors) plant in

Denison in 1961 (23). This slaughterhouse was the first plant from a new business venture created by two industry veterans who thought the industry practices at the time were antiquated (23). This plant revolutionized the industry in three main ways. First, the company located the plant in the center of a large cattle producing area. The company could now “purchase cattle directly from the farmer, eliminating the need for middlemen, and reducing transportation costs and the shrinkage and bruising associated with transporting animals long distance” (Stull, Broadway, & Griffith 1995, 18). Second, the plant itself had only one floor, whereas, prior to this plant slaughterhouses contained multiple stories. This structural change allowed for greater automation and the development of a disassembly line (18). The consequence of this modification resulted in a reduced need for highly skilled butchers; thus, the slaughterhouses now employed cheaper, less skilled laborers. By using all of this innovation, IBP “tried to take the skill out of every step” of butchering. One of the company’s founders explained to *Newsweek* in 1985, “We wanted to be able to take boys right off the farm and we’ve done it” (18). Thus, this new plant reduced operating costs on multiple fronts, and in doing so, it forever changed the business model for the industry.

In a few decades, IBP became the world’s largest red meat producer based off of the success of the Denison plant model. The rise of IBP brought the fall of the old packinghouse firms, and in their place rose three new giants: IBP, ConAgra, and Excel. These new industry leaders sought to further decrease labor costs by marginalizing the power of unions as much as possible with the end goal of eliminating them (Warren 2007, 67). Labor strikes and unrest became an annual occurrence in the early years of IBP. Additionally, as these new companies expanded, they purchased old unionized plants and reopened them after some modernization and offered considerably lower wages. For example, in 1989, IBP bought an old Oscar Mayer plant in

Perry and when it reopened the starting wages was \$5.80 an hour, nearly \$4.00 less than Mayer's starting wage. IBP pioneered this expansion and labor strategy first in Storm Lake in 1982 (Stull, Broadway, & Griffith 1995, 23). At first, these plants employed rural white males, but the gutting of the labor-union movement in the industry resulted in the work becoming less lucrative and less safe (Warren 2007, 67). Workers now worked more hours in less safe conditions for less money.

The racial composition of the workforce in slaughterhouses began to change in the 1980s. The deteriorating working conditions made the work less desirable to native-born whites (67). In a span of a few years, the workforces at many of these slaughterhouses went from employing mainly native-born whites to predominantly employing newly arrived immigrants. This happened, in large part, because immigrants were willing to accept these lower wages (44). Sociologist Lourdes Gouveia and anthropologist Donald Stull characterize this labor recruitment approach of slaughterhouses as "a Field of Dreams approach to labor recruitment--build it and they will come" (Stull, Broadway, & Griffith 1995, 100). Slaughterhouses will continue to recruit and employ the cheapest labor possible because it fits with their current business model. The wages and working conditions that the industry once enjoyed in the middle of the last century are long gone. Although Hispanics workers have been the most frequently recruited group of laborers for these packing plants, the slaughterhouses have recruited other racial and ethnic groups, including Eastern Europeans, Sudanese, and Hmong.

These seven rural school districts present a significant and interesting study in what happens when a relatively sudden demographic shift occurs in a small concentrated but isolated area and how the schools respond to these shifts. In essence, in the last twenty years, these districts have become less white and more Hispanic while also educating a greater number of

LEP/ELL and free or reduced lunch students. Four of these districts are already majority-minority (Columbus, Denison, Storm Lake, and West Liberty) while the other three are nearing that point. A majority-minority districts means that less than 50% of students are white. Moreover, if current demographic enrollment trends continue, these districts' status as being high-minority, high-poverty will intensify. The growth in the Hispanic population in Iowa, particularly in these districts, matters, not because for the sheer fact that this demographic is growing, but because Hispanic students consistently do not receive as good as an education in America as their white peers. Hispanic students consistently score significantly lower than white students on achievement tests, drop out at much higher rates, and tend to be educated in schools with fewer well-prepared teachers and with fewer resources. That means that Hispanic students nationally are not getting the quality education they have a right to. This is an issue of equity. Furthermore, since the 1980s, a continually greater number of minority students nationally are attending schools that are high-poverty, high-minority further intensifying the equity issue.

In describing his district, one principal in this study remarked, "We are an urban district in a rural setting" (Personal Interview, May 17, 2011). In this statement *urban* is code for largely non-white and impoverished student composition. While numerous studies have documented the growth of majority-minority schools in America in recent years, these studies, for the most part, occurred in urban areas. The districts in this study are isolated rural districts, districts that are not commonly thought of as being high-minority, high-poverty. This study investigates the phenomenon in rural America and adds an interesting and rarely heard voice to this discussion. While rural America remains largely ignored in the education research sphere, rural America educates a large portion of students. Nearly one in five American students attend a school designated as rural (Williams 2010, 1). These students cannot be ignored. This study uses both

qualitative and quantitative data to provide a policy recommendation for the districts in question with the intent of it helping them to better execute their mission of education their students with the focus on integration.

### **Methods**

The data for this study came from classroom observations, interviews, and statistical data in three of the seven districts in question: Columbus Junction, Denison, and Postville.

Observations occurred over a period of two weeks in May although observations did not happen in Denison because of scheduling conflicts. I collected data through the recording of narrative notes in five-minute intervals detailing actions and interactions of both students and teachers.

Altogether I observed six teachers, three in the Postville Community School District and three in the Columbus Community School District. I conducted interviews in a semi-structured fashion.

In total, I conducted ten interviews; three of them with principals and the other seven with teachers of English or Math. I administered the teacher interviews during their open periods, and as a result they lasted on average of fifty minutes, whereas the interviews with the principals lasted on average of ninety minutes because I conducted them after school or when they had free time. I analyzed the narrative notes and interview transcripts as objectively as possible. I did this analysis by searching for reoccurring themes throughout the data. A group of peers checked my analysis by reviewing the same data; I then compared their interruptions to mine.

Additionally, I used the same racial classifications that the data sources used. I understand that these classifications are not innocent and, indeed, maybe problematic. Nonetheless, for the purpose of this study I viewed them as essential. In addition, I used the classification “free and reduced lunch” to signify low income status as it is currently the best indicator to do so. Moreover, in analyzing the demographic data, I analyzed figures between the

1987-1988 and 2009-2010 school years because that was how far back the online data went. I thought that the twenty year window provided enough of a time frame to make the demographic shifts in these districts apparent. As for the achievement data, I looked at figures between 2003 and 2009. Again, this was the only achievement statistics available online.

Furthermore, I only used proficiency scores for White and Hispanic students in this study because those were the only racial/ethnic groups for which data was available. No data existed for Black and Asian/Pacific Islander students in these case studies. Moreover, Hispanic achievement data is missing for Postville for grade 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> both in math and reading because it was not reported during this time. Most likely the sample size for these sub groups were not large enough to warrant the release of the data. Lastly, I remind the reader that the preceding analysis occurred during a snap shot in time; the findings I discuss below reflect this fact.

## **Findings**

### **Case Studies**

#### **Columbus Junction.**

The Columbus Community School District (CCSD) is located in Columbus Junction in Louisa County in southeast Iowa with a population of 1,899 (U.S. Census 2010). The school district encompasses a single elementary, middle school and high school (the middle and high school currently share a building). There are no other educational institutions in town. The municipality is currently home to a Tyson's slaughterhouse, which originally opened as a Rath Packing Company plant. Following the bankruptcy of the company in 1985, IBP acquired the slaughterhouse and reopened it. Then, following Tyson's purchase of IBP in 2001, the plant was rebranded as Tyson's.

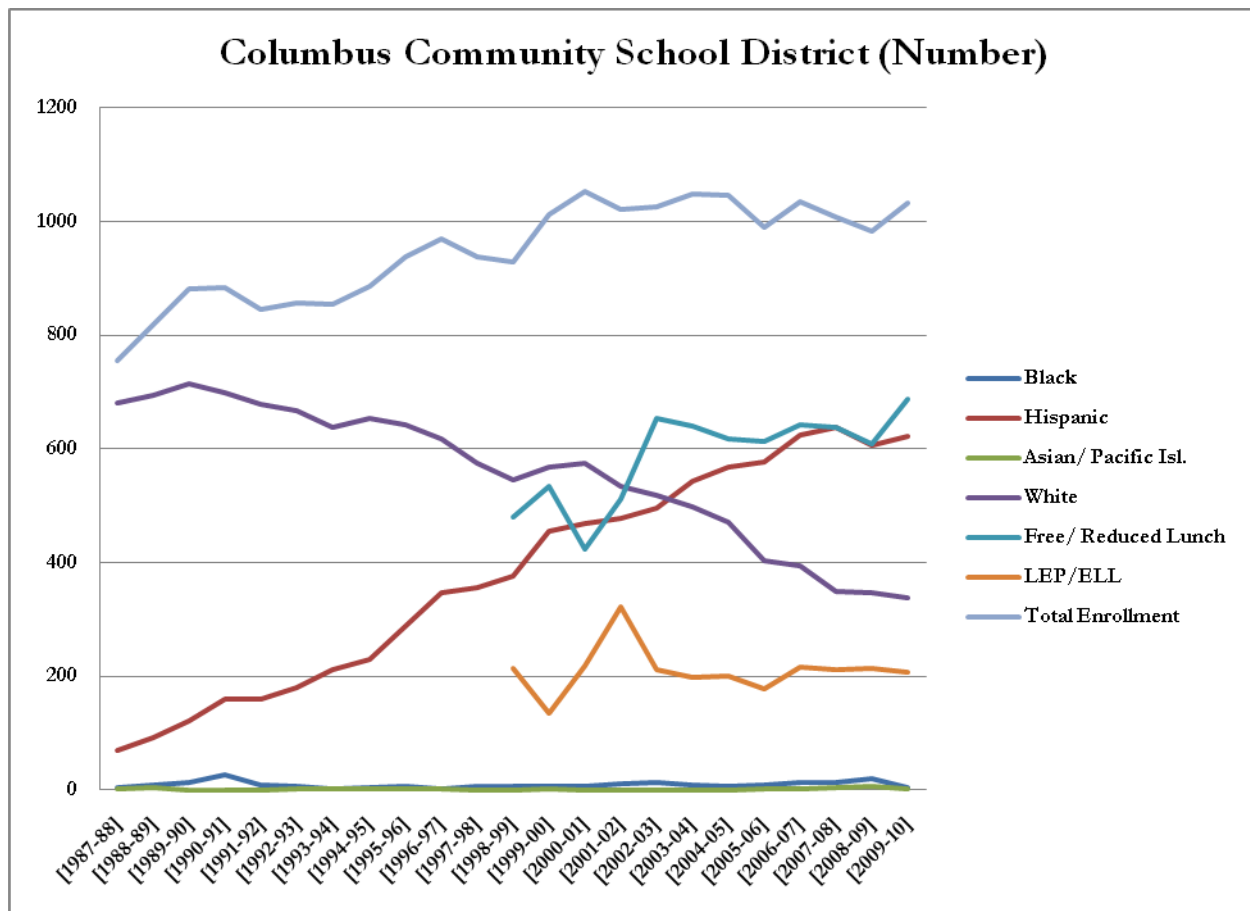


For the last twenty years the CCSD has become consistently more Hispanic and less white. Figure 1 shows the demographic and enrollment data for the CCSD from the 1987-1988 school year to 2009-2010. In the 1987-1988 school year, it was 90% white and only 9% Hispanic. In the 2009-2010 school year, the district was 33% white and 67% Hispanic, approximately a 63% decrease in the white population and approximately a 700% increase in the Hispanic population. The 2003-2004 school year marked the first time that the district began educating more Hispanic students than white students. Additionally, while white enrollment has continually decreased each year the districts overall enrollment has continued to increase for the most part during this time. In the 1987-1988 school year, enrollment was 755; by 2009-2010 enrollment had grown to 1033 students. In these twenty years, enrollment grew by an astounding 37%. Hence, the growth in the Hispanic student population offset the decrease in the white student population in this district. Though, throughout this time the Asian/Pacific Islander and Black population have remained consistently marginal, at less than 2% of total enrollment.

The number of LEP/ELL (Limited-English Proficient and English Language Learners) students between 1998-1999 and 2009-2010 has not increased much. However, between the 1999-2000 and 2001-2002 school year there was an almost 140% increase in LEP/ELL students, though over the next few years that number decreased to 1998-1999 levels. Also, between the 1998-1999 and 2009-2010 school year, this district saw an 43% increase in the number of free and reduced lunch students where now almost 70% of enrolled students are on some sort of food assistance. Additionally while the number of Hispanic students has continued to increase, the number of LEP/ELL students has not mirrored this growth. There is a positive correlation between Hispanic students and those on free or reduced lunch (.77), while there is no correlation between Hispanic students and LEP/ELL students (-.07). Clearly, between the 1989-1990 and

2009-2010 school year, the CCSD has become less white and more Hispanic while also educating more lower-income students.

**Figure One**



**Denison.**

The Denison Community School District (DCSD) is located in Denison in Crawford County in western Iowa where it is the county seat, as well as the largest city in the county, with a population of 8,298 (U.S. Census 2010). The school district encompasses two elementaries, a middle school, and a high school. Additionally, the DCSD has a grade sharing agreement with the Schleswig Community School District (SCSD) where DCSD educates SCSD’s students at the high school level although SCSD does not educate any DCSD. Denison also has a Catholic elementary school and a Lutheran elementary and middle school. Because of this unique

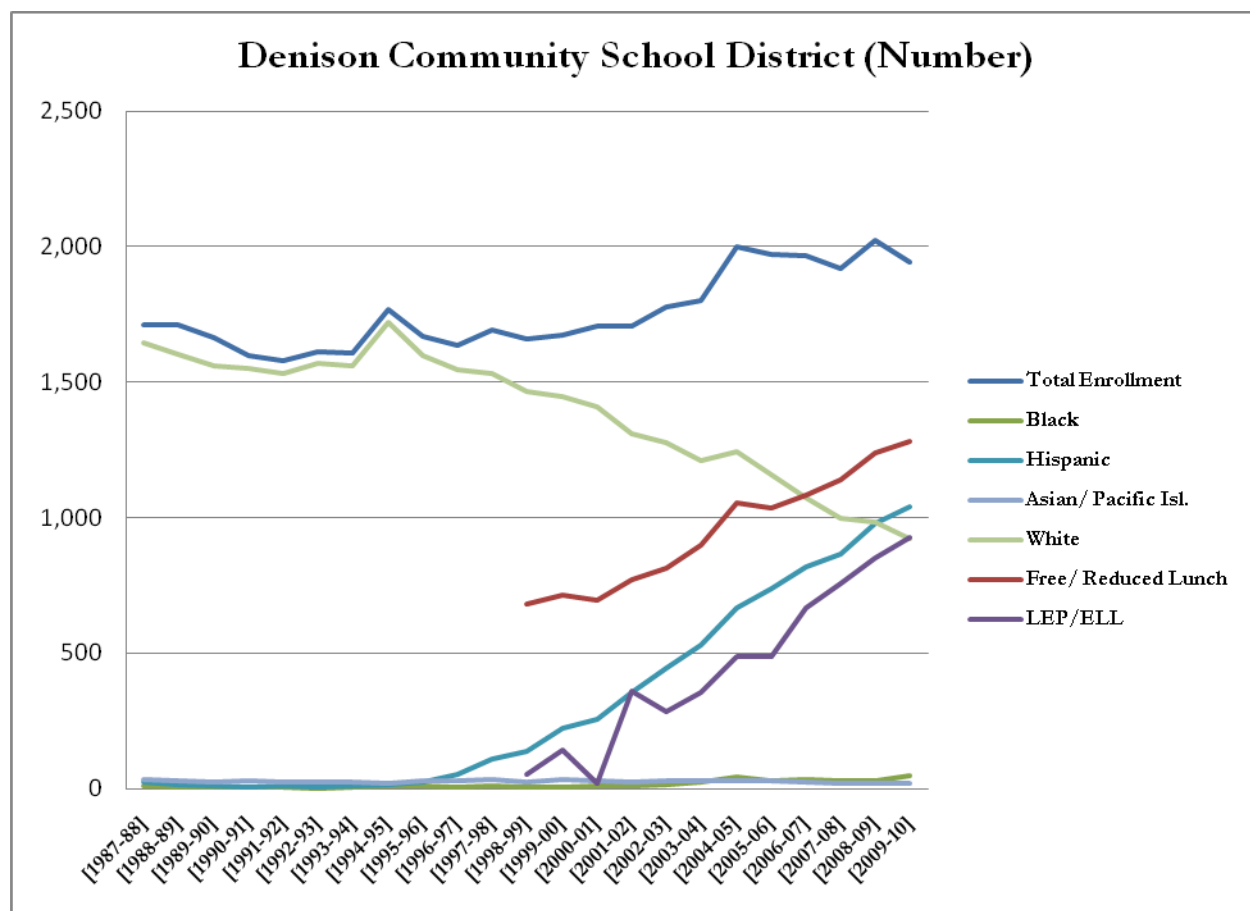
circumstance, the DCSD High School serves as a melting pot of students from the various feeder schools. It should be noted that the addition of these students at the middle and high school level complicates the data to a degree. The town of Denison is also currently home to two slaughterhouses: one Smithfield's and one Tyson's plant. As mentioned earlier the Tyson's plant opened in 1961. The Smithfield plant was opened in 1959 by the Consumers Cooperative Association and has had several owners over the years.

Figure 2 shows the demographic and enrollment data for the DCSD from the 1987-1988 school year to 2009-2010. For the last twenty years the DCSD has also become consistently more Hispanic and less white. In the 1987-1988 school year, it was 96% white and only 1% Hispanic. In the 2009-2010 school year, more than twenty years later, the district was now 23% white and 54% Hispanic, a more than 76% decrease in the white population and an almost 5300% increase in the Hispanic population. The 2008-2009 school year marked the first time that the district educated more Hispanic students than white students. Additionally, while white enrollment has continually decreased each year, the district's overall enrollment has continued to increase for the most part. Since the 1987-1988 school year, enrollment has increased from 1,712 to 1,941 students in 2009-2010, a 13% increase in twenty years. Hence, the growth in the Hispanic student population overcompensated for the decrease in the white student population. Additionally, between the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 school years, there was a 10% spike in total enrollment in the district. While the growth in the Hispanic population was responsible for 80% of this increase, this year marked the only time since the 1994-1995 school year where there was an increase in the number of white students in the district. The reason for this spike in enrollment is unclear and the number of white students has not shown an increase since this school year.

Throughout this time the Asian/Pacific Islander and Black populations have remained consistently small as well, rising to more than 2% of total enrollment

The number of LEP/ELL between the 1998-1999 and 2009-2010 has also increased considerably. In 1998-1999 only 3% of students were classified as LEP/ELL students, but by the 2009-2010 school year, 48% of students were LEP/ELL students, a more than 1500% increase. Additionally, between the 2000-2001 and the 2001-2002 school year, the number of LEP/ELL students went from 20 to 360 students, a 1700% increase in a single school year. The number of students qualifying for some sort of food assistance mirrors this growth. Between the 1998-1999 and 2009-2010 school year this district saw an 88% increase in the number of free and reduced lunch students where as of the 2009-2010 school year some 66% of enrolled students are on some sort of food assistance. There is a strong positive correlation between Hispanic students and those on free or reduced lunch (.99), and there is a strong positive correlation between Hispanic students and LEP/ELL students (.97). Thus, between the 1989-1990 and 2009-2010 school year, the DCSD has become less white and more Hispanic while also educating more lower-income and LEP/ELL students.

Figure Two



### Postville.

The Postville Community School District (PCSD) is located in Postville in Allamakee and Clayton County in far northeast Iowa with a population of 2,227 (U.S. Census 2010). The school district encompasses a single elementary, middle school and high school (the elementary and middle school currently share a building). There are also two Jewish schools in town, Bais Chaya Mushka for girls and Oholei Manachem for boys. The town at one point was home to two slaughterhouses, but only one is still in operation. The Iowa Turkey Processors operated a small plant, but the plant burned down in 2001, and the owners decided to move their operations to Minnesota (Devlin, Goldsmith, and Grey 2008, 16). The other plant originally opened as a Hygrade slaughterhouse but it shut down in the 1980s. Then in 1987 the old Hygrade plant was

bought, refurbished, and reopened as Agriprocessors by Brooklyn, NY butcher Aaron Rubashkin (17). This plant would go on to become the largest kosher packing plant in the country until May 2008. On May 12 of that year, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) conducted the largest single-site immigrant raid in U.S. history at the time. ICE arrested more than 300 Agriprocessors employees during this raid (Saulny 2008). In large part because of the raid, Agriprocessors declared bankruptcy. A few months later, the slaughterhouse was purchased and reopened by Agri Star, which brought kosher meat production levels back up to pre-raid levels by the end of 2010 (Henderson 2010).

Unlike DCSD and CCSD, the PCSD has experienced its demographic shift in the last ten years instead of twenty. Figure 3 shows the demographic and enrollment data for the PCSD from the 1987-1988 school year to 2009-2010. Until the 2000-2001 school year, the district was at least 90% white. Between the 2000-2001 and 2009-2010 school year, the districts white enrollment went from 87% to 53% while the Hispanic enrollment went from 9% to 37%. This is an almost 40% decrease in the white enrollment but a 300% increase in the Hispanic enrollment. Prior to this demographic shift, the white student enrollment, and consequently the overall district enrollment, remained fairly constant between the 1987-1988 and 1999-2000 school year. However, between 1987-1988 and 1991-1992, the district did see its white student enrollment grow considerably; overall district enrollment rose from 628 to 688 students, an almost 10% increase in four years.

Nonetheless, while the Hispanic enrollment increased in the PCSD between the 2000-2001 and 2009-2010 school year, this growth was not enough to offset the decline in the white student enrollment as happened in CCSD and DCSD. In this time period enrollment went from 590 to 545 students, a decrease of 8%, down from a high of 688 students in 1991-1992. There

are three possible explanations for this over enrollment decrease. First, native born white enrollment most likely decreased, a problem that has plagued many rural Midwestern communities. Second, the slaughterhouse shifted from largely employing Eastern Europeans to Hispanics. Third, the newly arrived Hasidic Jewish population in town mainly sent their children to the educational institutions they established. As one teacher said, “They [Hasidic Jews] come to the elementary if they need special education. But generally speaking they remain separate, not intermixing. They have their own schools for their children” (Personal Interview, May 17, 2011). Most likely these three factors resulted in a faster decline in the white student enrollment than the growth in the Hispanic student enrollment could overcome, as happened in the other case studies. Additionally, unlike the other case studies, there are still more white students in the districts than Hispanic students. However, if the current trends continue and as the younger grades, which are more Hispanic, move up, this district will educate more Hispanic than white students in the near future.

The number of LEP/ELL students between the 1998-1999 and 2009-2010 school year also increased drastically. In 1998-1999 only 2% of students were LEP/ELL students, but by 2009-2010 23% of students fell into this category, a more than 1000% increase. The number of students qualifying for some sort of food assistance mirrors this growth. Between the 1998-1999 and 2009-2010 school year this district saw an 91% increase in the number of free and reduced lunch students, whereas of the 2009-2010 school year some 63% of enrolled students are on some sort of food assistance. There is a strong positive correlation between Hispanic students and those on free or reduced lunch (.93), and there is also a strong positive correlation between Hispanic students and LEP/ELL students (.82). Between 1989-1990 and the 2009-2010 school year, the PCSD has become less white and more Hispanic. The district also educated more

lower-income and LEP/ELL students while having a declining overall enrollment especially in the last ten years.

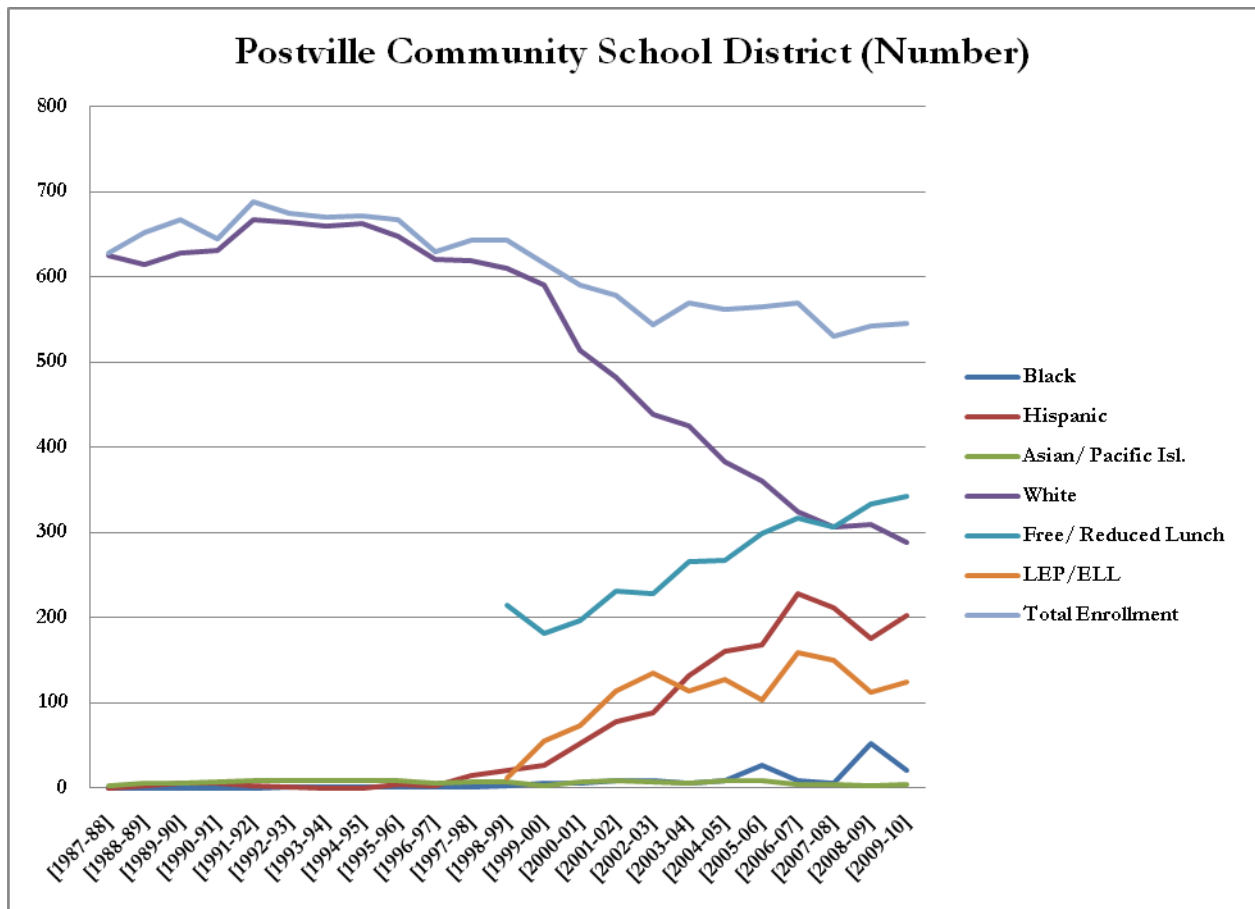
The impact of the May 2008 ICE raid is also apparent in the data. The raid occurred in the last two weeks of the 2007-2008 school year. When one compares the enrollment data from 2007-2008 to 2008-2009 one sees that many sudden demographic shifts occurred in the PCSD. The Hispanic enrollment decreased by almost 20%, while the white enrollment stayed fairly constant, although the black student enrollment increased from 4 to 53 students, a 1225% increase. However, this spike in black student enrollment was short-term; it declined to 21 students the next year, a 60% decrease. A possible explanation for this spike was that following the raid, the owners of the slaughterhouse had to recruit new laborers. In one of the interviews conducted for this study, an individual at the PCSD remarked that the plant contracted with temporary employment agencies to find workers for the slaughterhouse. Additionally, this individual said that a significant proportion of recruits from these agencies were African Americans from various parts of the country. The individual also remarked that many of the African Americans recruited for the slaughterhouse did not work long at the slaughterhouse and consequently did not stay in the community long (Personal Interview, May 17, 2011). The school composition data supports this statement. This would explain the sharp decline in black student enrollment the following year. Additionally, students on some sort of food assistance increased almost 10% following the raid. In summary, the school year following the 2008 ICE raid saw a sudden decrease in the Hispanic student population while also witnessing a short-term increase in black student enrollment and those qualifying for free or reduced lunch

Not only was this small district coping with a raid that distressed numerous of its students' families, but it also had to respond to these sudden demographic changes. However,



while the Hispanic student population decreased the school year following the raid, it recovered to almost pre-raid levels the following year. As mentioned earlier, while closed, the slaughterhouse was quickly reopened by Agri Star. Hence, it can be assumed that the reopening and return to pre-raid production levels at the packing plant is largely responsible for the return to pre-raid Hispanic levels at the school because of the return of Hispanic laborers at the plant. Thus, the recovery of the slaughterhouse meant the recovery of the Hispanic student population at the school. The impact felt by the PCSD demonstrates the extent of the district’s dependency on the packing plant.

**Figure Three**



### **General Findings.**

These case studies reveal an achievement gap along racial lines in these districts. Figure 4 shows the percent of students scoring proficient on standardized test between 2003 and 2009 in math and reading for grades 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> (Iowa Department of Education: Adequate Yearly Progress Report). The data show that racial clustering has occurred in these districts.

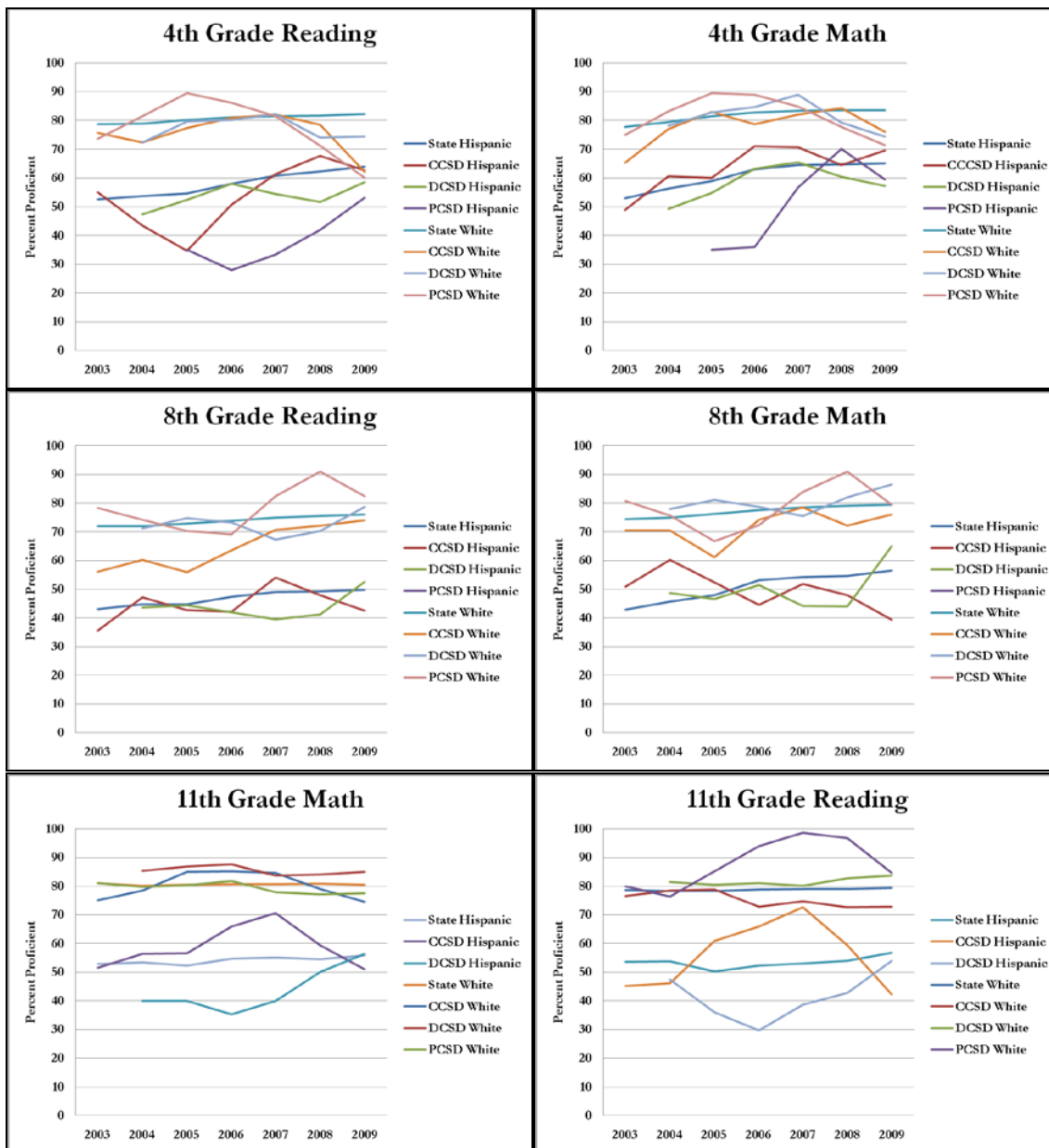
Furthermore, as the students progress, the achievement gap seems to widen. Additionally, as mentioned before, the younger grades in these districts also have higher percentages of minority students. The reasons for the growing gap and the variation from year-to-year remain uncertain. Nonetheless, these districts have a high number of nonwhite students who are not performing at the same level as their white counterparts.

Unfortunately, the achievement gap in these districts is nothing new. On the National Assessment of Educational Progress (2009), the percentage of Hispanic students scoring at least proficient was between 21%-29% less than white students in reading and math for grades 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup>. However, to focus the discussion around the achievement gap is too short sighted.

Linda Darling-Hammond in her book *The Flat World and Education: How America's Commitment To Equity Will Determine Our Future* (2010) argues that the opportunity gap needs to be addressed if closing the achievement gap truly is desired. Darling-Hammon expands on Gloria Ladson Billings concept of educational debt. She argues that accumulated differences in access to key education resources, high quality curricular opportunities, good educational materials, expert teachers, plentiful information resources, and personalized attention that support learning at home and at school are compounded inequalities that negatively affect student performance and thus create this opportunity gap. Until the opportunity gap is addressed,

she argues, the achievement gap will remain (28). Thus, these districts will not be able to close their achievement gaps until they tackle the opportunity gap among their students.

**Figure Four**



Additionally, in all of the case studies, the interviewees had positive things to say about the slaughterhouse(s) in their communities. Within the first five minutes of an interview, one principal made this statement to me: “I want to make something else clear: Our facility here in

town, our plant here in town, has been very valued in its cooperation with the school” (Personal Interview, June 9, 2011). Another principal commented, “Tyson has been an awesome community member. There is a lot of coordination between the chaplain [the defacto community liaison] and the plant manager. Tyson always provides food when we need it for various events” (Personal Interview, June 9, 2011). Principals in all three of the case studies emphasized the positive working relationships the districts had with their respective slaughterhouse(s) and all mentioned that the businesses were large donors financially and in-kind (donating meat for various events). However, during the interviews, when the respective slaughterhouse(s) in each community were discussed, the interviewees continually emphasized this positive working relationship as if they were trying to leave no doubt that the slaughterhouses have been good community members. That fact that many of the interviewees felt the need to stress this point indicates to me that they understand the general public’s negative view of slaughterhouses and thus felt the need to counter that view. As one principal commented, “They want to be a good neighbor, a good partner in the community, a good community member. They have a public relations, too, those expectations to keep. So I think they want to be positive members of the community because they have a rough image out there” (Personal Interview, June 8, 2011). The slaughterhouses understand the negative perception of them, hence, their efforts to combat this view through their donation of meat, monetary gifts, etc.

Besides discussing what they call generous support, some of the principals commented on the dual nature of their working relationship with the packing plants in town. One said,

I mean, it is a symbiotic relationship, I guess. The plants need good schools. Number one to educate potential future employees because we do have some kids who do, you know, won’t go to college. They will graduate from high school and they will go directly into

that workforce. Obviously, that is an advantage for Tyson or Farmland to have an educated workforce come in (Personal Interview, June 9, 2011).

Although the principal assumes that slaughterhouses want employees with a quality high school education, the industry in recent years mainly has hired poorly educated low-skilled workers to whom they can pay low wages, as discussed earlier. This hiring practice seems to contradict the principal's notion. In addition to that belief about why the packing houses need the school district, another principal stated, "I think that they have vested interest in the town because the easier they can make it for their employees in terms of getting their families acclimated to the area, the more productive they're going be for their plant" (Personal Interview, June 9, 2011). The principals believe that have an equal relationship with the slaughterhouse(s) because of the plant's needs for future quality laborers in addition to the stability provided by these districts for their workers. Hence, multiple dynamics are at play in the interactions between the districts and the slaughterhouses. However, while speaking of this relationship in symbiotic terms, interviewees, when pushed, did not hide the fact that their school and their community as a whole were economically reliant on the slaughterhouses.

In all of these communities, the slaughterhouses were the largest employers in the town and, in some cases, even the county. Hence, they were the economic powerhouses of their respected communities. One principal commented on this power:

But... they also know that they community wouldn't exist like it does today were it not for the meat packing plants that have essentially resulted in the large influx of Hispanic immigrants. I mean, those Hispanic immigrants help keep the other business and services afloat in the community, too, so I think people realize that connection and relationship that the meatpacking plants provide that labor pool and so forth that the rest of the

community needs to be able to thrive and be successful (Personal Interview, June 8, 2011).

In every case study, interviewees expressed a similar sentiment. Their communities and districts had become tied to their respective slaughterhouse(s). One interviewee bluntly stated, “If you took away Tyson and Farmland from the community, [this community] would probably shrivel up and go the way [of] many other [rural] Iowa communities” (Personal Interview, June 8, 2011). The notion that these packing plants are the lifeblood for their communities seems to result in their negative attributes being downplayed. The fact that they seem to prevent the population decline and community decay that many other rural communities have been experiencing has resulted in the communities turning a blind eye toward them.

What has happened in Postville since the May 2008 raid illustrates how fragile this relationship and economic support truly is. Much has been documented regarding the impact that the raid has had on the community at large, including the highly acclaimed *Abused: The Postville Raid* documentary. As for the PCSD, besides the obvious demographic losses and the emotional impact, the district now has to deal with the financial repercussions from the raid. Numerous interviewees in Postville asserted that the raid crippled the community’s housing market, as many individuals left town right after the raid. The market is flooded, and home values have plummeted as a result. For a district that heavily relies on property taxes for its operating budget, this financial shortfall has been compounding since the raid. Although as mentioned earlier, enrollment has returned to almost pre-raid levels, it will take some time before the district’s financial situation fully stabilizes and returns to pre-raid levels. Events on that single day in May shook the PCSD for years to come.

The district is fortunate that the slaughterhouse reopened and returned to pre-raid production levels fairly quickly. The district's recovery was entirely dependent on the ability of the slaughterhouse to recover. When asked what would happen to his district if a raid were to occur in his community one principal responded, "We would probably lose close to half of our kids... Maybe not right away, but probably within a year, we'd probably lose half of the enrollment" (Personal Interview, June 9, 2011). His district also has a raid emergency plan in place, though sadly this seems to be the extent to which these districts can prepare for such event. They seemingly are at the mercy of what occurs at these slaughterhouses. When asked how the next 5-to-10 years look for their districts, the principals all echoed this same sentiment, "Where they go, we go." It should be noted that the forces that propelled meatpacking to a position of in their rural communities come not from actions taken by these communities, but in the consumer demands in groceries stores across the nation. However, given time and space, this study will not delve into these power dynamics. Nonetheless, further investigation and research is recommended on the power dynamics in these communities.

Many of the interviewees also commented on the sudden demographic change described in the case studies above. One principal commented, "Obviously it wasn't just a sudden influx of Hispanic students and Hispanic members of the community but it has been a slow and steady increase over the last ten years primarily" (Personal Interview, May 18, 2011). Another principal commented that this slow and steady migration occurs as the result of word of mouth. This statement supports the point Gouveia and Stull (1995) made earlier about how slaughterhouses use the 'Field of Dreams' approach to labor recruitment: build it and they will come as the result of word of mouth. Furthermore, many of the new laborers are young. One principal remarked,

A lot of the workers that come are younger because the work at Tyson, or a lot of the meat packing plants, is hard work—it's physical. And what we've learned is that you don't see a lot of people over the age (and this is not an exact number), but once you get into the mid to late 40s. . . then no one is there anymore for very long that has been there for twenty years. The work is tremendously physical (Personal Interview, June 9, 2011).

The result of the hiring of young laborers for the slaughterhouse then indirectly impacts the enrollments of the school districts. One principal observed, "What it looks, like as more and more of our Hispanic families move in, they have younger children, so the families that have moved in, the kids just aren't high school age for the most part yet. I think that is slowly going to transition up" (Personal Interview, June 8, 2011). Another principal echoed this observation:

The one thing that you will see if you went and visited our elementary schools today, you would see that it is probably 60-65% Hispanic at the elementary level right now, K-3. High school, we are probably 40%, hovering right around that 40%, maybe slight over 40%. So when you look at our demographic in ten years so that is probably where we are going to be as a high school. So I would say right now the high school is not a full reflection of the community at large, but, you know, it's slowly going to catch up to that in the next ten years (Personal Interview, June 8, 2011).

The fact that the percentage of Hispanic students in the districts is lower than the percent in town has major implications. First, the demographic compositions of the lower grades would seem to be much different than that of the higher grades; most likely the students in the lower grades are much more Hispanic than those in upper grades. For these small districts that means providing services and meeting needs can be vastly different between schools. Second, because many of the newly recruited slaughterhouse laborers move into the communities at young ages,



demographic shifts, in most cases, will not become noticeable for a few years in the enrollment data.

The delay between the district demographic data reflecting the community becomes further apparent when considering the Sudanese influx that many of these communities are currently experiencing. One principal remarked,

If you go into our community you will see a lot more [Sudanese] in the community than you see in our school system. I think a lot of that has to do with, it seems to be a lot more single males from Sudan are working here. Not as many families as we have with our Hispanic immigrants. They [Hispanics] tend to have families, and the Sudanese tend to come by themselves more so. We do have a few in the high school. I think we have three Sudanese students in the high school. I couldn't tell you at the lower levels (Personal Interview, June 8, 2011).

In all three case studies, interviewees claimed that their communities had a growing Sudanese population. However, the most recent enrollment figures do not seem to support this claim. On the other hand, demographic shifts occur slowly as mentioned earlier. Hence, the influx of Sudanese individuals in the communities may take 5-10 years to become apparent in the enrollment data. One principal remarked, "You get one or two influential members of the Sudanese community that kind of got here early and got established. Then they created a support network for Sudanese immigrants" (Personal Interview, June 8, 2011). His observations further support Gouveia and Stull's (1995) claim. Thus it can be assumed that these communities are at the early stages of this demographic shift. This shift will have a large impact on these schools because most likely these students will have different educational needs. The unknowns and list

of possible new needs is long. Thus, these small districts will have to respond quickly to this demographic shift, placing an additional burden on them.

Although all of these districts have large LEP/ELL populations, they each differ in their responses. This is the result mainly of their available resources. CCSD has twice the number of LEP/ELL students as PCSD, and DCSD has more than four times the number of LEP/ELL students as CCSD. Simply put, 1 DCSD: 2 CCSD: 8 PCSD in terms of the number of LEP/ELL students. Because of its size, DCSD can hire a district LEP/ELL coordinator as well as a translator for each building in addition to its LEP/ELL teachers. In comparison, the PCSD has one LEP/ELL teacher for grades 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> and relies on a community liaison for translation and does not have a district coordinator. At one point, the district had a tutor who focused on the LEP/ELL students, but the grant that paid for her salary was lost; hence, the position no longer exists. This example illustrates that while these districts have many similarities, they still have a number of differences. Much more can be said about the LEP/ELL populations at these districts; however, this paper will not discuss this topic in great depth because of time and space constraints. Nonetheless, further investigation and research is recommended in this area, given the apparent differences among these similar districts.

Additionally, the composition of the teaching staff in these districts did not fully reflect that of the student body. Although the support staff at a few schools better reflected the community at large, having a greater proportion of Hispanics, very few of the teachers and administrators in these districts spoke English and Spanish. All of the principals saw this fact as problematic. One commented on the difficulties of not being bilingual: "It's a little bit of a disadvantage, probably more so communicating with parents than it is with students" (Personal

Interview, June 9, 2011). Because of the problem, all principals, as well as some teachers, expressed the desire to attract more Hispanic teachers to their districts.

Nonetheless, while expressed as a desire by many, there remains no formal program available for teachers to become bilingual. While lacking a program, though, one principal remarked, “Knowing my superintendent as well as I have over the last year, if we had a teacher come to us who really wanted to do it I think we can probably find professional development funds to help a teacher acquire those language skills” (Personal Interview, June 8, 2011). The problem with this informal arrangement comes from the fact that teachers would assume that because there is no formal program that therefore they cannot learn another language with the districts support. Additional effort is required on the districts part to publicize it. During classroom observations of the few bilingual teachers, the advantages of being bilingual were apparent. While reviewing vocabulary for an upcoming test in an English class one ESL student asked, “What is *evidence*?” The teacher was able to define it in Spanish and also provided synonyms in Spanish for the student. Additionally, another student had trouble with the word *sustain*, and the teacher was able to help in the same fashion. Hence, in this instance, being bilingual allowed the teacher to provide significant help to students. Additionally, while not considering himself fluent in Spanish, one principal said that he spoke enough conversational Spanish to get by. He remarked, “For me the Spanish really comes in handy with phone calls. It makes parents feel comfortable. I tend to handle a lot of the calls for other administrators that are for Hispanic parents” (Personal Interview, May 17, 2011). This comfort factor associated with the administrator being bilingual further eases the tension, while also increasing the communication channels between the school and the parents.

Though lacking a formal bilingual education program for current teachers, some of these districts have tried recruiting bilingual teacher candidates to their districts. One principal remarked, “We obviously want bilingual candidates. The reality is just that there are not enough to go around, especially in Iowa. I would say we do not have any Hispanic teachers on staff, and I would love for our teacher staff to look to look like our community that we serve” (Personal Interview, May 17, 2011). In addition to the presumed shortage of bilingual teaching candidates in Iowa, another district tried recruiting out-of-state bilingual teachers to their communities; however, this did not work out. The principal remarked, “Some of the best teachers we have had are locals who have returned to teach here. In years past, we have recruited bilingual teachers from California but they did not last long. It was too much of a cultural shock going from busy California to small town Iowa” (Personal Interview, May 17, 2011). Recruiting bilingual teachers not from the area proved an ineffective strategy for addressing this problem.

Therefore, given the difficulties associated with recruiting bilingual teachers one district has begun a unique approach to solving this problem. In the words of the principal, his district is “trying to home grow [their] own Hispanic teachers” (Personal Interview, June 8, 2011). He reports,

We have employed a lot of our former high school students, our graduates to serve in associate roles within our district as paraprofessional-type positions especially at the elementary schools. Employing former graduates in some capacity while they are going to school so that way we can somewhat keep a tie to them so that they can go back and get that education... I mean, if they are students who grew up in your community and they come back, those are some of the best teachers that we can find because they know what the community is all about. I think that is our best hope in terms of eventually

getting our teaching community to look a little bit more like our community at large  
(Personal Interview, June 8, 2011).

Given that it took some years before these schools reflected their communities, it will take some time for their teaching staff to reflect their student body.

In addition to the desire for the teaching staff to reflect the student body, these districts all expressed difficulties with teacher and administrator retention. One teacher remarked, “In the 9 years I have been here we have had 4 principals” (Personal Interview, May 16, 2011). High staff turnover presents additional challenges to these schools. Researcher Kacey Guin in her article “Chronic Teacher Turnover in Urban Elementary Schools” (2004) found that high turnover schools faced significant organizational challenges, such as problems with sustaining positive working relationships among teachers and planning and implementing a coherent curriculum. Given the important of teacher retention, one principal consistently emphasized the need to find the right fit in hiring for his school. He defined the right fit for his community as someone with roots in the community as well as being ready to stay in the community for several years. He believed that these connections served not only as a way of ‘tying them down,’ but accustomed them to small town life. He hoped that these ties would result in these teachers staying longer and thus teacher retention would become less of an issue (Personal Interview, June 8, 2011). In addition, the data showed that many of the teachers grew up in the surrounding area.

While all of the principals expressed their desire to diversify their teaching staff and improve their retention rates, they did differ on their opinions on whether white flight was occurring in these districts. One principal remarked that his district has not experienced white flight. He commented that his district is maintaining the current number of white students, although he admitted that the native born white birth rate is probably declining. He added that

open enrollment from neighboring districts has helped maintain the percentage of white students. In contrast, one teacher said, “Oh, it [white flight] is occurring. There has been an increase in students being home schooled, as well as an increase in open enrollment” (Personal Interview, May 19, 2011). One district even has a desegregation plan put in place to prevent this sort of thing from occurring, a rare thing for a rural district to have. The district implemented this plan so as to prevent students from transferring out under Iowa’s Open Enrollment law. It refers to its desegregation plan as a diversity plan that defines minority as students on free or reduced lunch and/or low academic performance. Race and ethnicity are not included in this definition. They cannot as the result of the *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1* (2007) U.S. Supreme Court decision. In that decision, the Court defined *minority* by income and achievement.

Although white enrollment has declined in all of these districts, two of three showed total enrollment growth between the 1987-1988 and 2009-2010 school years. Additionally, while the PCSD experienced an overall enrollment decline during this time, it has shown total enrollment growth in recent years. These enrollment trends bucks the state trends. While these districts show enrollment growth, most of the other rural school districts in the state have seen their enrollment figures decline year after year. The low native-born white birth rate, coupled with the urbanization occurring in the state, has fueled this trend, with no end in sight. Hence, while most rural Iowa school districts trim back budgets by letting go of teachers, ending programs, or consolidating, these districts are hiring teachers, adding programs, and expanding. One principal remarked in regard to this phenomenon, “I added two positions at the high school as we head into next year and remember you don’t find many high schools in [this part of] Iowa adding teachers, but I added a second ELL/literacy teacher at the high school level as well as a math

teacher” (Personal Interview, June 8, 2011). He added, “All be it growing in areas that sometimes create challenges for schools and working with a high ELL population, but I’ll take that challenge any day of the week verses a shrinking school where you are laying off teachers and just finding ways to keep the doors open” (Personal Interview, June 8, 2011). The growth in the Hispanic student populations is principally responsible for these districts’ growth. However, the increase in the Hispanic student population coupled with the declining white enrollment has resulted in these districts quickly becoming more Hispanic.

This quick demographic shift has not gone unnoticed by neighboring communities. While one interviewee believed that white flight was not occurring and another believed that the problem came from white students open enrolling, both are mistaken. The issue seems to be more systemic. All three principals are fairly new to their districts, two being in their first year and one being there for a few years. Given their short-term observation of the trend, they have a censored view of the matter. Most likely, native-born white families in recent years, when looking to settle in the area, decide not to settle in these communities. Instead, they settled in neighboring towns and consequently send their children to entirely different school districts. One principal did notice this trend: “White flight has not outright occurred; however, I would say that it has deterred certain families from settling here” (Personal Interview, May 17, 2011). Another teacher mentioned that she had noticed younger families deciding not to settle in their communities because of a perceived bad reputation.

A few individuals commented that people from the surrounding area perceive their districts as being “rough” and that they were home to “a lot of gangs”. Additionally, some interviewees expressed the idea that students in their districts were not being challenged enough, that teachers were teaching to the bottom group of kids while ignoring those on top. These

statements undoubtedly contain some element of underlying racism. Racial tension in communities home to slaughterhouses is nothing new. Warren talks about this racial tension in his book. The shift in labor pools in the slaughterhouses has been further intensified by the fact that these slaughterhouses are located in rural isolated communities. Warren (2007) asserts,

Declining overall economic opportunities have exacerbated ethnic and cultural tensions in the modern direct-buying packing communities. Because the erosion in packinghouse wages in the 1980s occurred at the same time a farm crisis devastated many Midwesterners' economic livelihoods, many native-born whites in these small towns no doubt directed their bitterness over their declining prospects at the Latino and Southeast Asian newcomers, as is evident in the ways that housing, crime, and education statistics have been interrupted. (72)

He goes on to discuss how many native-born whites perceive ills in their community after the arrival of the newcomers even though the statistics show no such change based on his analysis. As Warren's research documents, this perception of the case study communities is most likely disconnected from reality. Nonetheless, perception can be a powerful force, whether or not it is based in fact. Hence, regardless of whether these schools are more 'rough' or 'teach to the bottom,' native-born white families are choosing not to settle in these communities. The result of this trend is that these communities become more majority-minority as white student enrollment continues to decline resulting in the concentration of Hispanic students increasing in these districts.

The demographic shifts occurring in these districts have been happening across the country for some time. Since the 1980s, there has been a continuous pattern of deepening segregation for black and Latino students. Gary Orfield and Chungmei Lee in their national



report “Why Segregation Matters: Poverty and Educational Inequality” (2005) found that more than three quarters (77%) of Latino students attend majority-minority schools, while more than a third of all Latino students attend 90-100% Latino schools. On the other hand, close to 90% of white students attend schools that are at least half white (13). Clearly, schools in America are becoming more racially homogenous. Additionally, no longer can the connection between race and ethnicity with income be ignored. Nationally, majority-minority schools serve a greater number of poor students. The authors comment on this phenomenon:

The great majority of whites have a conception of a normal neighborhood school that is solidly middle class, and many families do not realize how different these middle class schools are from those serving the families and communities of segregated barrio or ghetto communities. Across the nation, less than 10 percent of black, Latino, Asian, and Native American students attend the low poverty schools that a huge majority of whites attend. (19)

This lack of interaction has consequences. Richard D. Kahlenberg in his report “All Together Now” (2001) concluded, “The best guarantee that a school will have what various individual reforms seek to achieve--high standards, qualified teachers, less crowded classes, and so on--is the presence of a critical mass of middle-class families who will ensure that these things happen” (16). High-poverty, high-minority schools tend to lack this voice, and as a result, the quality of education suffers.

The fact that many minority students in America attend high-poverty, high-minority schools means that they are not getting the same quality of education as their white peers. David H. Monk and Emil J. Haller in their article, “Predictors of High School Academic Course Offerings: The Role of School Size” (1993) found in their national study a correlation between

the academic credits offered and the average socioeconomic status of the student body. Schools with lower concentrations of low-income students had a more vigorous curriculum (19). In addition to a less challenging curriculum, high-minority and high-income schools face other challenges. High dropout rates are heavily concentrated in these schools in urban areas (Orfield & Lee 2005, 5). Additionally, “achievement scores are strongly linked to school racial composition and so is the presence of highly qualified and experienced teachers” (5). This situation compounds existing inequalities. Socioeconomic and racial segregation is a multidimensional, deeply rooted, and important cause of educational inequality.

Furthermore, this segregation does not only hurt those students in high-poverty, high-minority schools. Orfield and Lee (2005) assert, “Segregation harms both the segregator and the segregated, drastically limits opportunity, and does not provide the basis for building a successful interracial society” (4). Hence, racial and socioeconomic segregation also harms white middle-class students. The fact that the U.S. Census Bureau estimates that by 2042, the U.S. will no longer be majority white intensifies the problem. Furthermore, among Americans under the age of 18, this shift should occur in 2023 (Hsu 2009).

Given all these facts, Richard Rothstein in his book *Class and Schools: Using Social, Economic, and Education Reform to Close the White-Black Achievement Gap* (2004) argues that, based on his analysis that without addressing the issues that arise with poverty, it is unrealistic to expect to change schools in any deep way. Kathryn Borman et al in their article “Accountability in a Postdesegregation Era: The Counting Significance of Racial Segregation in Florida’s Schools” (2004) argues that high-minority, high-poverty schools are institutions of concentrated disadvantage and that policies “that attempt to resolve the achievement gap by funding equity or classroom size changes” will not succeed until tackling the segregation issue(605). The civil

rights movement was never about blacks' ability to sit next to whites on the bus, it was about equalizing opportunity. The fact that the districts in this study increasingly serve a greater portion of low-income and minority students means that the achievement gap present in them will continue to persist and will most likely increase until the opportunity gap closes, as Darling-Hammond argued earlier. Furthermore, this problem lays not in the child, but in the system. These children do not have the same opportunities, and from this shortfall, the achievement gap emerges.

### **Policy Options**

Given the discussion in the previous section, the fundamental problem in these districts is that they are increasingly serving high-minority and high-poverty student populations. Because the achievement gap will likely continue, a public policy intervention is justified because of the problems with the status quo. There are three potential policy options to address this issue. The first, a voluntary busing system; the second, forced consolidation; the third, is community schools.

Almost all instances of busing for racial and socioeconomic balance in the United States have occurred in large urban districts. Given that urban districts serve a large and often diverse student population, busing provides a cost-effective method to distribute these economic and racial differences among the schools in the districts. However, a small rural district does not have the ability to bus students within its own borders to achieve balance. For example, all of the districts in this study only have one middle and high school. Thus, busing within these districts would not be possible. For this reason, in order for busing to achieve the policy objective, it would need to occur in conjunction with neighboring districts. Almost all of the neighboring districts have significantly lower portions of Hispanic and low-income students. However, the

*Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No.1* (2007) decision by the U.S. Supreme Court complicates enactment and implementation of this option. As mentioned earlier, this court decision makes busing for racial balance purposes much more difficult. Hence, in order for this policy option to remain legal it would need to be voluntary, which would be problematic for several reasons.

First, many individuals would chose not to participate or it might prove to be popular in one area and fail in another. It will additionally vary from year to year. Second, the enforcer of this option remains unknown. The state cannot mandate to the districts that they implement a voluntary busing program. Thus, this policy option clearly carries with it great uncertainty in achieving the objective. Furthermore, the success of busing in urban areas is questionable, to say the least. Also, districts would have higher bus cost: Given the rising cost of gasoline and the fact that many of these districts serve large areas, this cost could quickly add up. Another complication with this policy option is that given that most money in education is tied to students, the districts that lose students would be affected negatively financially. Consequently, they would most likely oppose this policy.

Forced consolidation is another option that could potentially achieve this policy objective. This policy option would be implemented at the state level; the state would order various neighboring districts to consolidate with the districts in this study. This policy option would effectively achieve the policy objective of reducing the percentage of students who are poor and minority in these districts. Furthermore, the districts in this study, for the most part, are the only growing rural districts in the state; most have seen decreasing enrollment year after year for decades now.

However, the main concern with this policy option is the fact that it is politically very unpopular. Parents, teachers, community members, etc. in the affected districts would most likely not support this policy option for various reasons including the fear of losing a school in their community, as well as racial fears and misconceptions. Three potential ways exist to garner support for this policy. First, the state could strongly emphasize the benefits that the affected individuals will gain from a larger consolidated district. These benefits would include more extracurricular activities, more course offerings (including the fine arts), and more sports programs. Second, the state could negotiate arrangements with the affected districts to distribute the school buildings for the newly merged districts among the affected towns (i.e., have the elementary, middle, and high school in the different communities). Lastly, the state could set aside a sizeable amount of money to distribute to these newly merged districts, which would allow the affected districts to build new schools and related facilities. Although the cost of this policy option would be quite sizeable at first (because of the special fund set up to ease the transition), in the long term, the consolidation of these districts should reduce their operating costs because of the economies of scale created.

However, although consolidation does force the integration of students into the same academic building, it does not mean that integration will occur in the classrooms—which is where it matters most. Hispanic students could be easily tracked into the lower ability classes, while white students are tracked into in the higher ability classes. This would create a situation in which very little interaction actually occurred among races and socio-economic groups, preventing the goals of integration from being achieved.

Figure 5 lists the neighboring districts that the state potentially could consolidate with the three case studies in this paper. (All of the data in Figure 5 are from the 2009-2010 school year.)

The data make apparent the extremely different racial and socioeconomic compositions between the case study districts and the districts that the state potentially would consolidate with them.

**Figure Five**

|   | <b>Total Enrollment</b> | <b>ELL</b>        | <b>Hispanic</b>   | <b>Free or Reduced Lunch</b> |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| <b><u>Columbus Community School District</u></b>  | <b><u>1,033</u></b>     | <b><u>20%</u></b> | <b><u>60%</u></b> | <b><u>67%</u></b>            |
| Louisa-Muscatine Community School District        | 809                     | 0%                | 10%               | 46%                          |
| Highland Community School District                | 732                     | 5%                | 8%                | 26%                          |
| <b><u>Denison Community School District</u></b>   | <b><u>1,941</u></b>     | <b><u>48%</u></b> | <b><u>54%</u></b> | <b><u>66%</u></b>            |
| Ar-We-Va Community School District                | 332                     | 4%                | 8%                | 24%                          |
| Boyer Valley Community School District            | 462                     | 2%                | 6%                | 34%                          |
| Charter Oak Community School District             | 335                     | 2%                | 6%                | 47%                          |
| Schleswig Community School District (only K-8)    | 307                     | 6%                | 10%               | 29%                          |
| <b><u>Postville Community School District</u></b> | <b><u>545</u></b>       | <b><u>23%</u></b> | <b><u>37%</u></b> | <b><u>63%</u></b>            |
| Central Community School District                 | 541                     | 0%                | 0%                | 31%                          |
| MFL-MARMAC Community                              | 870                     | 0%                | 1%                | 40%                          |

|                 |  |  |  |  |
|-----------------|--|--|--|--|
| School District |  |  |  |  |
|-----------------|--|--|--|--|

Community schools, the third option, have been a gaining traction since the late 1990s and are a fairly new concept in education policy (Chang 2011, 1). These schools build on the belief that providing wrap-around services that target the key academic, mental, social, physical, and emotion needs of students is essential. They originate from the fact that schools tend to be the focal point of rural small towns. The U.S. Department of Education defines a community school

... a public elementary or secondary school that works with its local educational agency and community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, and other public or private entities to provide a coordinated and integrated set of comprehensive academic, social, and health services that respond to the needs of its students, students' family members, and community members... [and] promotes family engagement by bringing together many partners in order to offer a range of supports and opportunities for students, students' family members, and community members (Chang 2011, 4).

Generally, when creating a community school, a school district partners with local anchor institutions that can offer adult education and expanded learning opportunities, such as the local community college, or that can provide auxiliary services, such as the local hospital. The exact anchors vary from community to community because of different needs and resources in communities. This policy option would retain this design and flexibility; it would not require that certain organizations or entities be included in the every community school. Instead, this option would require that a committee composed of various community stakeholders be formed in each district to determine the services to be included in the community school. Only a small number of services would be required to be provided, and these would be drawn from a list that includes healthcare, adult education, high-quality early learning programs, mentoring, and other youth

development programs. Furthermore, since recent immigrants need these resources the most, but are the least likely to seek them out, the community school approach of merging these services under the same roof as the school should hopefully increase their utilization.

In most instances, this policy option will require physical additions to existing schools. Thus, the implementation of this option would require the state to create a one-time pool of money that these districts can apply for to offset these construction costs. This pool of money would also pay for a full-time program coordinator in each community school, who will be tasked with aligning all participating partners and stakeholders in and out of the building, so that dialogue is continually occurring. This position would need to be funded through a five-year grant that is fully supported the first two years, with the state then paying 75%, 50%, and finally 25% of the cost in the last three years. The districts would have to provide the difference in the out years, and after five years, it will then be up to each district as to whether or not to continue to fund the position.

By providing these wrap-around services to students and their families, students can concentrate on their school work and will perform better in the classroom. Center for American Progress Education Scholar Theodora Chang concludes her policy paper on the benefits of community schools by asserting that “creating and sustaining strong academic gains often requires addressing unmet student needs that are nonacademic” (2011, 13).

Although Chang’s comments reflect the benefits that this policy might unleash, the policy, on some level, could perpetuating the notion that separate can be equal if white families are not able to be drawn back in, which is, as mentioned earlier, highly unlikely to occur. Thus, this policy option does not directly address the policy program of segregation. It assumes that by improving the academic climate for the students, these districts will become more attractive to



white families who will then return to and settle in these communities. However, the success of this outcome is nearly impossible to measure, and, furthermore, in the implementation of this policy option, actors need to be careful not view community schools as a quasi-hand-out institution. The community must view these schools as helpful for everyone—a place that benefits all, not only the underprivileged segment of the population. If the latter were to occur, the segregation problem in these communities might only worsen.

**Figure Six**

**Policy Options Evaluation Matrix**

| <b>Legend</b>   |  |
|---|--|
| Good: Policy option met or exceeded criterion                                       |  |
| Fair: Proposal attempts to address criterion, but could be improved                 |  |
| Poor: Policy option did not meet criterion  |  |
| Unknown: No information was contained in the policy option to assess this criterion |  |

|                              | <b>Policy Option 1:<br/>Voluntary Busing<br/>System</b>  | <b>Policy Option 2:<br/>Forced<br/>Consolidation</b>   | <b>Policy Option 3:<br/>Community Schools</b>   |
|------------------------------|--|--|---|
| <b>Effectiveness</b>         | <i>Unknown:</i> Because it is voluntary, the effect is unknown. However, most likely it will be poor.      | <i>Good.</i> Very effective at addressing the problem because it forcibly changes the demographic composition of these districts.  | <i>Poor:</i> This option relies only on the hope that native-born white families return to the area.  |
| <b>Political Feasibility</b> | <i>Good:</i> Since it is voluntary and not mandated, it would be a fairly easy thing to do politically.    | <i>Fair:</i> Not politically easy; however, the special fund set up for these districts should make it more politically feasible.  | <i>Good:</i> Given the additional benefits that these schools provide, community members would be very supportive of this option because of what they have to gain.                   |
| <b>Cost</b>                  | <i>Good:</i> Of the options, it would have the lowest cost because of only increased transportation costs. | <i>Fair:</i> Requires a large amount of money upfront to set up the special fund for these districts. However, in the long term, the consolidation of these districts should | <i>Poor:</i> This option would also require a sizeable amount of money upfront to set up the special fund to aid in the transformation of the schools in these districts to community |

|  |  |   |          |
|--|--|---|----------|
|  |  | reduce their operating costs because of the economies of scale created. | schools. |
|--|--|---|----------|

### **Policy Recommendation**

Policy option one, voluntary busing system, scores well in its low-cost implementation and its political feasibility, given its likely public support; however, its effectiveness remains unknown since participation is voluntary. Policy option two, forced consolidation, scores well in effectiveness because it is compulsory. On the other hand, it scores only fair in cost because of the initial capital needed to launch the program although it saves money in the long term because of economies of scale. It also only scores fair in political feasibility because of the contentious nature of consolidation although the special fund set for it should make what is normally a contentious subject less controversial. Policy option three, community schools, scores poor in cost because of the sizeable amount of money needed upfront to set up the special fund to implement the policy. It also scores poorly in effectiveness because it relies on the hope that native-born whites will move back into the area once the policy is enacted. However, it scores well in its political feasibility given the additional benefits it brings individuals.

After reviewing the political feasibility, cost, and effectiveness of each policy option, I recommend that the voluntary busing option not be pursued and that a hybrid of the consolidation and community school options be pursued for these districts. This hybrid option combines the consolidation plan, with the construction of community schools in these newly merged districts. This recommendation would best achieve the policy objective of successful integration in these districts because these districts get the benefits of the effectiveness of forced consolidation (integration) with the political benefits of community schools (politically popular) as well as the educational benefits (enhanced learning environment). Furthermore, I recommend that efforts be made to solicit donations from the slaughterhouses in each community to help

with costs of policy enactment. They would benefit from the goodwill and public relations that it would create in the community.

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## Appendix 1: Citation Correction

The following citation corrections have been made in this research paper.

- Page 4
  - This structural change allowed for greater automation and the development of a disassembly line (18).
- Correction
  - This structural change “allowed for greater automation and the development of a disassembly line” (18).
  
- Page 4 and 5
  - For example, in 1989, IBP bought an old Oscar Mayer plant in Perry and when it reopened the starting wages was \$5.80 an hour, nearly \$4.00 less than Mayer’s starting wage. IBP pioneered this expansion and labor strategy first in Storm Lake in 1982 (Stull, Broadway, & Griffith 1995, 23).
- Correction
  - For example, in 1989, “IBP bought an [old] Oscar Mayer plant[t] in Perry and [when it] reopened [the] starting wages [was] \$5.80 an hour... nearly \$4.00 less than Mayer’s starting wage” (Stull, Broadway, & Griffith 1995, 23). IBP pioneered this expansion and labor strategy first in Storm Lake in 1982 (23).
  
- Page 32 and 33
  - Since the 1980s, there has been a continuous pattern of deepening segregation for black and Latino students. Gary Orfield and Chungmei Lee in their national report “Why Segregation Matters: Poverty and Educational Inequality” (2005) found that more than three quarters (77%) of Latino students attend majority-minority schools, while more than a third of all Latino students attend 90-100% Latino schools. On the other hand, close to 90% of white students attend schools that are at least half white (13).
- Correction
  - Since the 1980s, “there has been a continuous pattern of deepening segregation for black and Latino students” (Orfield and Lee 2005, 4). Gary Orfield and Chungmei Lee in their national report “Why Segregation Matters: Poverty and Educational Inequality” (2005) found that “more than three quarters (77%) of Latino students attend majority-minority schools,” while “more than a third of all Latino students attend 90-100% [Latino] schools.” On the other hand, “close to 90% of white students attend schools that are at least half white” (13).
  
- Page 34
  - Schools with lower concentrations of low-income students had a more vigorous curriculum (19).
- Correction
  - “Schools with [lower] concentrations of low-income students had a [more] vigorous curriculum” (19).

- Page 34
  - Socioeconomic and racial segregation is a multidimensional, deeply rooted, and important cause of educational inequality.
- Correction
  - Orfield and Lee (2005) write, “socioeconomic [and racial] segregation is a stubborn, multidimensional and deeply important cause of educational inequality.”
  
- Page 34
  - Given all these facts, Richard Rothstein in his book *Class and Schools: Using Social, Economic, and Education Reform to Close the White-Black Achievement Gap* (2004) argues that, based on his analysis that without addressing the issues that arise with poverty, it is unrealistic to expect to change schools in any deep way.
- Correction
  - Given all these facts, Richard Rothstein in his book *Class and Schools: Using Social, Economic, and Education Reform to Close the White-Black Achievement Gap* (2004) argues that, based on his analysis that without addressing the issues that arise with poverty, “it is unrealistic to expect to change schools in any deep way.”