

REFORMS that could help NARROW THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

By Richard Rothstein

Policymakers almost universally conclude that persistent achievement gaps must result from wrongly designed school policies — either expectations that are too low, teachers who are insufficiently qualified, curricula that are badly designed, classes that are too large, schoolclimates that are too undisciplined, leadership that is too unfocused, or a combination of these. This exclusive focus on schooling is wrong. Without complementary investments in early childhood preparation, health care, housing, after-school and summer programs, and other social and economic supports, the achievement gap will never be closed.

Americans have concluded that the achievement gap is the fault of “failing schools” because it makes no common sense that it could be otherwise. After all, how much money a family has, or a child’s skin color, should not influence how well that child learns to read. If teachers know how to teach and if schools permit no distractions, children should be able to learn these subjects whatever their family income or skin color.

This common sense perspective, however, is misleading and dangerous. It ignores how social class characteristics in a stratified society like ours may actually influence learning in school. It confuses social class, a concept which Americans have historically been loathe to consider, with two of its characteristics, income and,

in the United States, race. For it is true that low income and skin color themselves don’t influence academic achievement, but the collection of characteristics that define social class differences inevitably influences that achievement.

If as a society we choose to preserve big social class differences, we must necessarily also accept substantial gaps between the achievement of lower-class and middle-class children. Closing those gaps requires not only better schools, although those are certainly needed, but also reform in the social and economic institutions that prepare children to learn in different ways. It will not be cheap.

What follows is a series of reforms, in addition to school improvement, that could help narrow the achievement gap.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT
BETWEEN LOWER-CLASS AND
MIDDLE-CLASS CHILDREN
REQUIRES NOT ONLY BETTER
SCHOOLS, ALTHOUGH THOSE
ARE CERTAINLY NEEDED,
BUT ALSO REFORM IN THE
SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC
INSTITUTIONS THAT PREPARE
CHILDREN TO LEARN IN
DIFFERENT WAYS. IT WILL
NOT BE CHEAP.

Doing something about the wide income gap between lower- and middle-class parents could be one of the most important educational reforms we could consider.

Income Inequality

Low-income families have seen their incomes grow far less than those of middle-class families in recent years. As a result, too many families have inadequate incomes to provide security for children. Doing something about the wide income gap between lower- and middle-class parents could be one of the most important educational reforms we could consider.

The lowest fifth of families with children in the national income distribution saw after-tax income decline by 1.2% per year from 1979 to 1989. These families had gains in the early 1990s (up 2.5% annually from 1989 to 1995), largely because of improvements in the Earned Income Tax Credit. But after-tax income growth for low-income families was just 1.1% per year in the boom of the late 1990s. Then recession reduced their incomes by 5.8% from 2000 to 2002.¹ Thus, over the entire 1979-2002 period, after-tax incomes of the lowest fifth of families with children rose by just 2.3%, and during much of this period, these families' already low incomes were declining, placing them (including their children) under great stress.

In contrast, middle-income families saw after-tax income rise by 17% during this period, even after a 3% decline in the recent recession.² Thus, the last few decades has seen a widening income gap between those in the bottom and those in the middle.

A more positive development is that the ratio of Black to White median family income increased from 57% a quarter century ago to about 64% today. This still leaves Black family incomes far behind those of Whites. The ratio of Black to White median family wealth has improved at an even greater rate, from 7% to 12%. Yet these trends still leave a far greater disparity in wealth than in income.³

Many families, especially minority families, have incomes that are too low to adequately support children. In 2000, 11% of Americans had incomes below the poverty line, no different from the poverty rate in 1973.⁴ The racial disparity has diminished, as Black poverty has dropped from 31% in 1973 to 23% in 2000, while White poverty has risen from 8% to 10%. This still leaves the Black poverty rate more than twice as great as the White rate. A third (33%) of Black children under age 6 were poor in 2000, as were 13% of young White children.⁵

Further, the official poverty line (roughly \$18,000 for a family of four in 2001) sets too low a threshold to describe the income needed to assure minimal stability. A more realistic basic family budget is about twice the poverty line. Using such a standard, half of all Black and one fifth of all White families have inadequate incomes.⁶

To narrow the Black-White achievement gap and the gap between all lower- and middle-class children, supporting the incomes of low-wage parents can make an important contribution. In real dollars, the value of the minimum wage has plummeted by 25% since 1979.⁷ While few parents of school children work for the minimum wage, many work in industries whose wages are affected by the minimum wage.⁸ A wage increase could well have an impact on student performance, comparable to that of within-school educational reforms. Other reforms to labor market institutions, such as making it easier for workers to seek and obtain collective bargaining (as the law was intended to facilitate), would also lift wages of low-income workers who are trying to support children.

In the 1990s, the federal government moved to offset trends toward growing income inequality, primarily by expansion of the Earned Income Tax

Credit, a subsidy to low-income working parents with children. It had an impact. In 2000, low-income single mothers earned, on average, about \$8,000, but after the tax credit and other public assistance, their average income nearly doubled.⁹ However, this income, at about the poverty line, is still not enough to enable their children to have a reasonable chance to achieve, on average, at the level of middle-class children.

A commitment to low unemployment would be particularly helpful to low-income families and minorities, groups disproportionately hurt by recessions. The 4% unemployment rate achieved in 2000, if sustained, could have done much to increase the security of low-income families and their children.

Stable Housing

Also important are reforms, not typically thought of as educational, that help lower-class families afford stable and adequate housing. The high mobility rates in lower-class neighborhoods inevitably result in lower student achievement. When children move in and out of schools, not only does their own achievement suffer but so, too, does the achievement of their classmates whose learning is also disrupted. There are many reasons for the high mobility of low-income families, but one of them is the lack of affordable housing in many urban areas today, as housing prices accelerate faster than wages and inflation. A serious commitment to narrowing the academic achievement gap should include a plan to stabilize the housing of working families with children who cannot afford adequate shelter. A national housing policy that reduced the mobility of low-income families might also do more to boost test scores of their children than many instructional reforms.

One federal program to subsidize rents of such families is the “Section 8” voucher program. It is under constant political attack and never fully funded.¹⁰ The average annual cost of a Section 8 voucher is now about \$6,700.¹¹ The federal government spends about \$14 billion annually on Section 8 vouchers for about two million families, only about one fourth of those eligible.¹² If vouchers were provided to all eligible families, the cost could rise to \$56 billion. Considered as an expenditure that contributes to an adequate education, it would be equivalent to about \$1,000 on a per pupil nationwide

basis.¹³ Even with a commitment to such spending, the money could be appropriated only very gradually because there is now insufficient housing stock to accommodate the families who need it.

An experiment to test whether housing policy could affect student achievement (as well as other outcomes) was stimulated initially by a housing desegregation suit in Chicago. A settlement required the Chicago Housing Authority to provide federal housing vouchers that would help public housing residents (mostly Black) to move to rental units in desegregated neighborhoods. This “Gautreaux” program (the name is that of the plaintiff in the original lawsuit) seemed to show that families who moved to suburbs had better employment outcomes than comparable families who used vouchers for rental units in the city. Adolescent children of suburban movers also apparently fared better than their urban counterparts, having lower dropout rates and better achievement. Although grade point averages of suburban and city movers were nearly identical, similar grades probably represented higher achievement in suburban than in urban high schools because suburban schools had higher standardized test scores.¹⁴

These results whet the appetites of housing experts for a true experiment, and in 1994 Congress appropriated funds for the Department of Housing and Urban Development to implement a “Moving to Opportunity” (MTO) experiment to determine whether low-income families benefit from living in communities where fewer families were poor.¹⁵ Such experimentation is rarely possible in social science because the denial of a benefit to a control group presents difficult ethical problems, but these problems are mitigated if the benefit is scarce due to no fault of the experimenters, and the experimental pool from which both treatment and control groups are drawn can be comprised entirely of volunteers. The benefit can then be allocated in some random fashion lending itself to observation of an experiment.

These conditions were met in MTO because there are long waiting lists for Section 8 vouchers, and demand for private apartments whose owners are willing to participate in the program far exceeds the supply.¹⁶ So establishing a control group whose members do not receive subsidies does not withhold a benefit from those who otherwise might receive it.¹⁷

The MTO experiment established lists of families with children who presently live in high-poverty neighborhoods. To get on the lists, families had to express interest in using vouchers to move to private apartments in low-poverty communities. MTO officials then randomly selected families from these lists for three groups: the main treatment group that received vouchers for subsidies to rent private apartments in low-poverty communities (the families were given counseling and assistance in locating such apartments); a comparison group that received vouchers for subsidies to rent private apartments wherever they could find them without counseling and assistance; and a third group, the controls, that received no vouchers for private housing. Scholars were invited to track the experiment over a 10-year period.

Although it was generally expected that the mover children would benefit, this was not certain. Effects on children of associating with higher-achieving peers should be positive. But there is also some evidence that placing lower-class children in middle-class communities can lead these children to withdraw from academic competition due to feelings of inadequacy.¹⁸

At this point, MTO evidence is mixed. One study found that younger children in mover families had higher test scores than the controls, but outcomes for adolescents were more ambiguous. Teenagers from mover families were more likely to be disciplined in school and to drop out than those in the control group. This might be because the disciplinary and academic standards in the suburban high schools were higher than the standards in the neighborhoods where the controls resided.¹⁹

While the results of the MTO experiment are mixed, we can still only speculate about how important such efforts might be in narrowing the achievement gap.²⁰ It seems reasonable, though not certain, that if funds spent to stabilize housing were included in a broader program that facilitated the movement of low-income families to mixed neighborhoods, the achievement gap might be further narrowed as children benefited from the positive peer influences that characterize more integrated educations. Along with rental subsidies and assistance to families in finding rental units in mixed neighborhoods, such a broader program, to be effective, should also include changes in local zoning laws

that now prevent low- and moderate-income rental units from being located in many middle-class neighborhoods, and better enforcement of fair housing laws that prohibit racial discrimination by realtors and landlords. These should all be considered educational, not only housing, programs.

School–Community Clinics

Without adequate health care for lower-class children and their parents, there is little hope of fully closing the achievement gap. A high priority should be establishing health clinics associated with schools that serve disadvantaged children. Because many lower-class children have health problems that impede learning, quality education cannot be delivered to these children without adequate medical care. Because parents in poor health cannot properly nurture children, a quality education also requires that lower-class parents get the means to achieve good health themselves.²¹ These goals require the establishment of school clinics that serve children through their high school years, and their parents as well.

A school-community clinic should include services that middle-class families take for granted and that ensure children can thrive in school. Clinics associated with schools in lower-class communities should include: obstetric and gynecological services for pregnant and post-partum women; pediatric services for children through their high school years; physicians to serve parents of all school-age children; nurses to support these medical services; dentists and hygienists to see both parents and children semi-annually; optometrists and vision therapists to serve those who require treatment for their sight; social workers to refer families to other services; community health educators to instruct young women in proper health habits during pregnancy, or to organize smoking reduction campaigns; and psychologists or therapists to assist families and children who are experiencing excessive stress.

For elementary and secondary schools, the nation currently spends over \$8,000 per pupil, on average.²² Health clinics with a full array of services, associated with schools serving lower-class children, would add another \$2,500 per pupil to the annual cost of educating the children in these schools.²³ Some of

Lower-class children's early childhood experiences should provide an intellectual environment comparable to what middle-class children experience — rich in language, where well-educated adults are companions, instructors, and role models.

this money is not new public spending. The costs for some of these services are eligible for Medicaid or other public reimbursement. However, because some children and their parents who should get Medicaid and other public health services do not presently receive them, either because the application is cumbersome or because parents fear applying or do not know to apply, only guaranteed access through a school-based clinic can ensure that children will be healthy enough to learn to their full capacities.

Several small programs could be implemented relatively cheaply. Putting dental and vision clinics in schools serving low-income children would cost only about \$400 per pupil in those schools. This is less money than is often proposed for school reforms like teacher professional development or class size reduction. Schools might get a bigger test score jump from dental and vision clinics than from more expensive instructional reforms. Designing experiments to evaluate this possibility would not be difficult.

Early Childhood Education

Low-income and minority children can benefit fully from good schools only if they enter these schools ready to learn. Narrowing the achievement gap requires early childhood programs, staffed with professional teachers and nurses, and with curricula that emphasize not only literacy but social and emotional growth. Social class differences in vocabulary and conceptual ability develop by age 3.

Lower-class children's early childhood experiences should provide an intellectual environment comparable to what middle-class children experience — rich in language, where well-educated adults are companions, instructors, and role models. Lower-class children should hear more sophisticated language, be exposed

to books at an early age, and experience the excitement of stories read, told, and discussed.

To achieve in school, toddlers who don't gain these experiences at home will have to gain them in formal programs that differ from typical daycare settings in lower-class communities where children may be parked before television sets and rarely taken on interesting excursions or guided in exploratory play. Typical daycare staff for lower-class children are poorly paid and often have educations that are no greater than the children's parents'. Because of the low wages, the educational background of caregivers for low-income children declined in the 1990s.²⁴

Adequate early childhood programs also differ from Head Start, which typically does not serve children until the age of 3 or 4, too late to fully compensate for their disadvantages.²⁶ But there are nonetheless exemplary aspects of Head Start. Although the Bush administration is attempting to shift the balance of Head Start instruction toward more academic activities, most Head Start programs have addressed not only academic skills alone but also children's health, dental, nutritional, social, and emotional needs. Head Start also includes a role for parents, and staff members are required to visit parents to instruct them in "middle-class childrearing skills."²⁶

To narrow the achievement gap later in life, lower-class toddlers should begin early childhood programs at six months of age, and attend for a full day. Three- and four-year-olds should attend preschool, also for a full day, year-round.²⁷

This would be costly. Programs for infants from six months to one year of age should place teams of two caregivers with groups of no more than eight children, or an adult-to-child ratio of 1:4. As toddlers mature to two years of age, this group size should increase to 10 children, a ratio of 1:5.²⁸

The achievement gap between Black and White children grows the most during summer vacations, when middle-class children have experiences — reading books, going to camp, visiting museums, and traveling — that reinforce their school-year learning, while lower-class children fall behind.

To provide an intellectual environment similar to one that gives middle-class children a boost, pre-school teachers (for four-year-olds) should have a bachelor's degree in early childhood education. Each should be assisted by a paraprofessional, in groups of 15, resulting in an adult-child ratio of 1:7.5. This permits adequate supervision of group work and play, reading aloud, and less formal instruction.²⁹

These recommendations are neither new nor radical. British reformers established “infant schools” for toddlers of impoverished factory workers in the 1820s, arguing, as experts do today, that costs of infant schools would be recouped in reduced costs for crime and welfare.³⁰ These schools, and arguments, were widely imitated in the United States before the Civil War, until American experts decided that very young children should be socialized at home, not in school.³¹

Today, most experts again recognize that such services are needed, although they rarely say so publicly, regarding the expense as politically unrealistic. One recent exception has been Susan B. Neuman, assistant secretary of education during the first two years of the George W. Bush administration. Neuman resigned in 2003 and subsequently denounced the “No Child Left Behind” Act for what she called its “troubling assumption” that all children’s early childhood experiences prepare them for school success.³²

On the contrary, Neuman said, “from the beginning, the playing field is...not equal.” Early childhood education should start in “the toddler years,” with high professional-to-child ratios, so adults can engage in what she described as “the rich language interactions that are necessary to allow children to explain, describe, inquire, hypothesize, and analyze.” It is not low expectations that cause disadvantaged children to fail, Neuman concluded. Rather, she said, “our failure

has been to adequately compensate for the gap when it can best be overcome — in the earliest years.”

An adequately staffed early childhood center should also have professionals who help bridge the gap between lower-class parents and schools. A home-school teacher can offer parent workshops on appropriate play activities and discipline. She can visit children’s homes, observe regular classrooms, and consult with regular teachers, then help parents, to the extent they are able, support teachers to aid instruction. Such a professional can prepare parents to meet with teachers, help them to interpret school documents (like report cards), and connect parents with others who have similar problems and concerns.

An adequate early childhood program for lower-class children would also employ visiting nurses. Home nurse visits to pregnant women and those with newborns should monitor mothers’ and infants’ health as well as teach health-related parenting skills that affect children’s ability to learn. Educating new mothers and all women of childbearing age about the effects on children of smoking and alcohol would be an obvious role.

Where such programs have been tried, there is evidence of their value. In one randomized controlled experiment, nurses visited low-income unwed mothers during their pregnancies and continued these visits during the first two years of the newborns’ lives. The researchers continued to track the children through adolescence. The youngsters who, along with their mothers, received the nurse services had less crime, sexual activity, cigarette and alcohol use, and associated behavioral problems, compared to a control group that received no such services. The visiting nurses also affected the mothers’ behavior: The mothers had less closely spaced subsequent unplanned pregnancies and less alcohol and drug abuse themselves. Mothers’ behavioral changes of this kind are known to reduce

anti-social behavior in children. In the experiment, children of mothers who were visited by nurses during pregnancy had higher I.Q. scores at ages 3 and 4, attributable solely to nurses' success in getting mothers to reduce smoking.³³ Added positive effects flowed from other behavioral changes.

Adding the cost of such early childhood programs to regular education finances would boost average annual costs of elementary and secondary schools for lower-class children by another \$2,500 per pupil.³⁴

After-School Programs

After-school and summer programs are also necessary contributions, organized to provide not only added opportunities for academic work, but also the non-academic activities that enhance students' personal skills. When middle-class children leave school in the afternoons, they may go to Girl or Boy Scouts, religious groups, Little League, or soccer practice, or take art, dance, or music lessons. Lower-class children are more likely to play informally or watch television.³⁵

Structured after-school activities contribute to academic proficiency. Children with broader experiences can empathize with literary characters, and this enhances the incentive to read. After school, privileged children are more likely to practice social responsibility in church or youth organizations, and develop the organizational skills and discipline that make them more effective adults.

Every child has a somewhat different collection of skills, abilities, and interests. Children who may not excel in math may get a chance to do so in soccer, drama, or piano. Self-confidence gained may carry over to academics. It is foolish to think that lower-class children can achieve, on average, at middle-class levels without similar opportunities. Although some lower-class students have these opportunities at the YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, the Children's Aid Society, or publicly funded after-school programs, many do not.

Adolescents need such activities not only for what they provide but what they prevent. Students without supervision are at greater risk for truancy, stress, poor grades, and substance abuse. They are most likely to be perpetrators or victims of crime in the first few hours after school.³⁶

An adequate after-school and weekend program for lower-class children would add another \$5,000 per pupil annually to the cost of these children's elementary and secondary schools.³⁷

Summer Programs

The achievement gap between Black and White children grows the most during summer vacations, when middle-class children have experiences — reading books, going to camp, visiting museums, and traveling — that reinforce their school-year learning, while lower-class children fall behind. An education that hopes to narrow the achievement gap, therefore, should provide comparable summer experiences — not only extra drills in reading and math and not even a summer school only of more advanced academic skills. Art, music, drama, dance, and physical education teachers should be more numerous in summer than in the regular year.

A summer program that truly provides lower-class children with such "middle-class" experiences would add another \$2,500 to annual per-pupil costs of the schools lower-class children attend.³⁸

The Dangers of False Expectations and Adequacy Suits

All told, adding the price of health, early childhood, after-school, and summer programs, this down payment on closing the achievement gap would probably increase the annual cost of education, for children who attend schools where at least 40% of the enrolled children's families have low incomes, by about \$12,500 per pupil, over and above the \$8,000 already being spent. In total, this means about a \$156 billion added annual national cost to provide these programs to low-income children.³⁹ Even such an expenditure will not fully close the gap, but it might increase the overlap in outcomes of Black and White, lower- and middle-class children.

There would be some offsetting savings. If lower-class children had adequate health care and intellectually challenging experiences in an early childhood program, their later placement in special education programs would decline. Experiments that tested high-quality preschool programs showed that children

in these programs were less likely to require special education when they got to regular schools.⁴⁰ Similarly, vision therapy, adequate prenatal care, reduction in adult smoking and alcohol use, and other health interventions also reduce the placement of children in special education. For 35 years, special education has been the fastest-growing category of education spending, consuming about 40% of all new money given to schools.⁴¹ A significant part of this growth is attributable to the learning difficulties and mental retardation of lower-class children whose disabilities result disproportionately from inadequate health care and inappropriate early childhood experiences.

Education policymakers often say that higher salaries are needed for teachers in general, and even higher salaries than these are needed to attract the most qualified teachers to take jobs in schools where children are most in need. Teaching lower-class children who come to school not ready to learn is difficult, and even if dedicated teachers volunteer for the task, they often wear down and leave for easier assignments after a few years. But if lower-class children came to school ready to learn, in good health, and with adequate early childhood experiences, teachers would find more success and fulfillment in working with them. Less of a salary increment would be needed to attract teachers to work with such children.

Another often recommended policy is smaller class sizes, especially in elementary schools that mostly serve children from lower-class families. These smaller class sizes have had a demonstrable effect on life-long achievement but are expensive. In the Tennessee experiment, for example, class sizes in kindergarten through third grade were reduced from 24 to 15. If this reduction were implemented for lower-class children only, average spending for these children would go up by about \$500, not including the cost of building new classrooms to house the added classes.⁴² But if teachers of lower-class children had the opportunity to build on the academic and social achievements of an adequate early childhood program, higher achievement could be generated without so drastic a decrease in primary grade class size.

The \$156 billion in new spending, suggested here to make a dent in the achievement gap, is not now on the political agenda. But this is not the same as

to say it is unaffordable. An average annual spending increase of \$156 billion is only about two thirds of the average annual cost of federal tax cuts enacted since 2001.⁴³ So if Americans truly wanted to narrow the social class differences that produce an educational achievement gap, we could do so.

Many lawsuits around the country involve plaintiffs, usually representing minority children or school districts in which they are numerous, who demand “adequate school funding.” The most prominent recent case is one in New York State where the Court of Appeals found the state’s school financing system unconstitutional because it does not give lower-class children the opportunity to achieve at middle-class levels. Such lawsuits, if successful, can improve education for minority and low-income youth. But advocates of this litigation should not raise expectations that even significantly more new dollars in schools alone will close the academic gap. In New York, the plaintiffs have proposed an added \$4,000 per pupil for schools in New York City, a 24% increase in per-pupil spending. The plaintiffs say these new funds should mostly be used for smaller classes and higher teacher pay. Such new spending will certainly improve education for New York City youngsters. But advocates for the plaintiffs have gone further, and say that such an increase could close the achievement gap and enable all students to achieve at high enough levels to qualify for admission to academic colleges.⁴⁶ This expectation is bound to be disappointed. If social class differences in readiness for learning are unaddressed, such a goal can only be met if high school graduation and college admissions standards are diluted to unrecognizability.

Funds sought in adequacy cases, while substantial, are tiny compared to what is truly needed for adequate outcomes. Schools, no matter how good, cannot carry the entire burden of narrowing our substantial social class differences.

Teacher Morale

In American education today, policymakers and educators frequently invoke slogans like “no excuses,” or “all students can learn to the same high standards,” proclaiming what they say is their commitment to close the achievement gap between lower-class and middle-class children. Some say that these

incantations are harmless, and, even if they are hyperbolic, serve the useful purpose of spurring teachers, principals, and other school officials to greater efforts to raise the achievement levels of minority and other disadvantaged students.

Such whips can serve this useful purpose. But they can also do great damage. They de-legitimize good and great teachers who dedicate themselves to raising minority student achievement in realistic increments. They drive out of the teaching profession decent teachers who feel inadequate to the task of reaching

utopian goals, or who resent the cynicism of politicians and administrators who demand that such goals be attained. If this disconnect continues between what is realistically possible and the goals we establish for educators, the nation risks abandoning public education only to those willing to pander to political fashion by promising to achieve in schools what they know, in their hearts, is not possible. And in the polity, “no excuses” slogans provide ideological respectability for those wanting to hold schools accountable for inevitable failure.

References

- Allgood, Whitney C., and Richard Rothstein. Forthcoming. *At-Risk Adequacy Calculations*. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.
- Barnett, W. Steven. 1995. “Long-Term Effects of Early Childhood Programs on Cognitive and School Outcomes.” *The Future of Children: Long-Term Outcomes of Early Childhood Programs* 5(3): 25–50.
- Barnett, W. Steven, Kenneth B. Robin, Jason T. Hustedt, and Karen L. Schulman. 2004. *The State of Preschool: 2003 State Preschool Yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research. <http://www.nieer.org/yearbook>
- Bernstein, Jared, and Jeff Chapman. 2002. *Time to Repair the Wage Floor*. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.
- Bernstein, Jared, Chauna Brocht, and Maggie Spade-Aguilar. 2000. *How Much is Enough: Basic Family Budgets for Working Families*. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.
- Boushey, Heather, Chauna Brocht, Bethney Gunderson, and Jared Bernstein. 2001. *Hardships in America: The Real Story of Working Families*. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.
- Brooks-Gunn, Jeanne, and Greg J. Duncan. 1997. “The Effects of Poverty on Children.” *The Future of Children* 7(2): 55–71.
- CBO (Congressional Budget Office). 2003, May 15. *Effective Federal Tax Rates for All Households, by Household Income Category, 1979 to 2000*. Washington, DC: CBO. <ftp://ftp.cbo.gov/45xx/doc4514/08-29-Report.pdf>
- Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. 2003. *Introduction to the Housing Voucher Program*. Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.
- Citizens for Tax Justice. 2003. *Details on Bush Tax Cuts So Far*. <http://www.ctj.org/pdf/gwbdata.pdf>
- Currie, Janet, and Duncan Thomas. 1995. “Does Head Start Make a Difference?” *American Economic Review* 85(3): 341–364.
- Donohue, John J. III, and Peter Siegelman. 1998. “Allocating Resources Among Prisons and Social Programs in the Battle Against Crime.” *Journal of Legal Studies*, 27 J. Legal Stud. 1.
- Dreier, Peter, and David Moberg. 1995. “Moving From the ‘Hood.’” *American Prospect* 24 (Winter): 75–79.
- Garces, Eliana, Duncan Thomas, and Janet Currie. 2000. *Longer Term Effects of Head Start*. NBER Working Paper W8054, December. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Gordon, Larry. 1997, September 23. “A Social Experiment in Pulling Up Stakes.” *Los Angeles Times*.
- Hacs, Timothy A. 2002. *Children as Pawns. The Politics of Educational Reform*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Janofsky, Michael. 1999, March 7. “The Dark Side of the Economic Expansion. The Poor Wait Longer for Affordable Housing, Government Finds.” *New York Times*.
- Jencks, Christopher, and Susan Mayer. 1990. “The Social Consequences of Growing Up in a Poor Neighborhood.” In Laurence E. Lynn and Michael G. H. McGeary, eds., *Inner-City Poverty in the United States*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- Kaufman, Julie E., and James E. Rosenbaum. 1992. “The Education and Employment of Low-Income Black Youth in White Suburbs.” *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 14(3): 229–240.
- Kling, Jeffrey R., and Jeffrey B. Liebman. 2004. *Experimental Analysis of Neighborhood Effects on Youth*. Working Paper 483, Industrial Relations Section, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.
- Krueger, Alan B., and Pei Zhu. 2003. *Another Look at the New York City School Voucher Experiment*. Working Paper 470, Industrial Relations Section, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.
- Lareau, Annette. 2002. “Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families.” *American Sociological Review* 67 (October): 747–776.

About the Author

Richard Rothstein is a Research Associate of the Economic Policy Institute. From 1999 to 2002, he was the national education columnist of *The New York Times*. He is the author of *Class and Schools: Using Social, Economic and Educational Reform to Close the Black-White Achievement Gap* (Teachers College Press, 2004). He also authored *The Way We Were? Myths and Realities of America's Student Achievement* (1998). Other recent books include *The Charter School Dust-Up: Examining the Evidence on Enrollment and Achievement* (coauthored in 2005); and *All Else Equal. Are Public and Private Schools Different?* (coauthored in 2003). Rothstein can be reached at rr2159@columbia.edu.

- Lee, Valerie, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, and Elizabeth Schnur. 1988. "Does Head Start Work? A 1-Year Follow-Up Comparison of Disadvantaged Children Attending Head Start, No Preschool and Other Preschool Programs." *Developmental Psychology* 24(2): 210–222.
- Lippman, Laura, Shelley Burns, and Edith McArthur. 1996. *Urban Schools, The Challenge of Location and Poverty*. NCE 96-184. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.
- Ludwig, Jens, Helen F. Ladd, and Greg J. Duncan. 2001. "Urban Poverty and Educational Outcomes." *Brookings-Wharton Papers on Urban Affairs, 2001*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
- MacDonald, Heather. 1997. "Comment on Sandra J. Newman and Ann B. Schnare's '...And a Suitable Living Environment': The Failure of Housing Programs to Deliver on Neighborhood Quality." *Housing Policy Debate* 8(4): 755–62.
- Mishel, Lawrence, Jared Bernstein, and Heather Boushey. 2003. *The State of Working America 2002 / 2003*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children). 1998. *Accreditation Criteria & Procedures of the National Association for the Education of Young Children — 1998 Edition*. Washington, DC: Author.
- NCE (National Center for Education Statistics). 2003b. *Digest of Education Statistics — 2002*. NCE 2003-060. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.
- Neuman, Susan B. 2003. "From Rhetoric to Reality: The Case for High-Quality Compensatory Pre-Kindergarten Programs." *Phi Delta Kappan* 85(4): 286–291.
- NIOOST (National Institute for Out of School Time). 2000. *Fact Sheet on School-Age Children's Out-of-School Time*. <http://www.wellesley.edu/WCW/CRW/SAC/factsht.html>
- Olds, David L., et al. 1997. "Long-Term Effects of Home Visitation on Maternal Life Course and Child Abuse and Neglect: Fifteen-Year Follow-Up of a Randomized Trial." *Journal of the American Medical Association* 278 (8): 637–643.
- Olds, David L., et al. 1999. "Prenatal and Infancy Home Visitation by Nurses: Recent Findings." *Future of Children* 9(1): 44–65.
- Rosenbaum, James E. 1991. "Black Pioneers: Do Their Moves to the Suburbs Increase Economic Opportunity for Mothers and Children?" *Housing Policy Debate* 2(4): 1179–1213.
- Rothstein, Richard. 1997. *Where's the Money Going? Changes in the Level and Composition of Education Spending, 1991–96*. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.
- Rothstein, Richard. 2000b, October 18. "Better Than a Voucher, a Ticket to Suburbia." *New York Times*.
- Rothstein, Richard, with Karen Hawley Miles. 1995. *Where's the Money Gone? Changes in the Level and Composition of Education Spending*. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.
- Sard, Barbara, and Will Fisher. 2003, September 23. *Senate Committee Bill May Avert Cuts to Housing Vouchers Despite Inadequate Appropriation*. Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.
- Sanbonmatsu, Lisa, Jeffrey R. Kling, Greg J. Duncan, and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn. 2006. *Neighborhoods and Academic Achievement: Results from the Moving to Opportunity Experiment*. NBER Working Paper No. 11909, January. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Vandell, Deborah Lowe, and Barbara Wolfe. 2000. *Child Care Quality: Does it Matter, and Does it Need to be Improved?* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/ccquality00/index.htm>
- Vinovskis, Maris A. 1995. "School Readiness and Early Childhood Education." In Diane Ravitch and Maris A. Vinovskis, eds. *Learning From the Past. What History Teaches Us About School Reform*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Winter, Greg. 2004, February 5. "\$4 Billion More Is Needed to Fix City's Schools, Study Finds." *New York Times*.

Endnotes

1 CBO 2003. Data from 2003 are not yet available.

2 The most spectacular contrast, of course, is with the highest 1% of families, who had income growth exceeding 230% over the 1979-2002 period. However, the focus here is on the contrast between low- and middle-income families because this is the relevant comparison for the educational achievement gap between lower- and middle-class children.

3 The data on income are from 1979 to 2000. Mishel, Bernstein, and Boushey 2003, Table 1.4. The data on wealth are from 1983 to 1998. Mishel, Bernstein, and Boushey 2003, Table 1.4. These are the most recent comparable data.

4 Mishel, Bernstein and Boushey 2003, Table 5.2.

5 Mishel, Bernstein and Boushey 2003, Table 5.3.

6 Bernstein, Brocht, and Spade-Aguilar 2000; Boushey et al. 2001, Table 3.

7 Mishel, Bernstein and Boushey, Table 2.41.

8 Bernstein and Chapman 2002.

9 Low-income single mothers are defined here as those whose earnings were below the median for all single mothers. Mishel, Bernstein and Boushey 2003, Figure 5M.

10 A widely promoted reform, claimed to raise the achievement of lower-class children, is the provision of vouchers to pay private school tuition for such children. However, such vouchers usually only enable these children to attend private schools that are similar in social class composition to the public schools that voucher recipients would leave. The result is that such voucher programs have no meaningful effect on lower-class children's achievement. Krueger and Zhu 2003. Housing vouchers, however, permit lower-class children to attend middle-class schools where their achievement can rise. Rothstein 2000b.

11 Sard and Fisher 2003.

12 Center on Budget and Policy Priorities 2003.

13 There are presently about 50 million children enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools.

14 Rosenbaum 1991; Kaufman and Rosenbaum 1992.

15 MTO differs from Gautreaux in that MTO tests the effect of moving out of predominantly low-income communities, whereas analyses of Gautreaux test the effect of moving out of predominantly minority communities. In practice, there is considerable overlap.

16 Janofsky 1999.

17 In other respects, however, the program has still been controversial. Particularly in Baltimore, groups claiming to represent suburban residents complained that moving poor families into the suburbs would raise crime rates and reduce property values in these suburbs. As a result of these complaints, the federal government delayed commencement of the experiment, and then scaled it back (Dreier and Moberg 1995; Gordon 1997). Some conservative social critics attacked the program, claiming that recipients of vouchers who move to the suburbs will include not only the victims of inner-city social disorganization, "but the perpetrators as well, who may then spread social problems to marginal but stable working-class neighborhoods" (MacDonald 1997).

18 Jencks and Mayer 1990.

19 Ludwig et al. 2001.

20 Subsequent to the initial publication of the book, *Class and Schools*, from which this article is drawn, a new review (Sanbonmatsu et al. 2006) of all MTO studies finds less reason for encouragement, and wonders why the experiment's results were so much less favorable than the experimenters had expected.

21 Brooks-Gunn and Duncan 1997 cite evidence that low-income parents have worse physical and mental health than middle-class parents, and that parental mental health has an adverse effect on child outcomes.

22 NCES 2003b, Table 167. The average per-pupil amount for 1999-2000, the most recent year reported, was \$8,032.

23 This is based on a cost estimate of \$2,600 per pupil in schools that had such clinics. The bases for this and subsequent estimates in this chapter, with program models and descriptions of service assumptions, will be published in a forthcoming working paper by Allgood and Rothstein. The numbers are still subject to revision. If we assume that these clinics should be placed in schools where at least 40% of the enrolled students were eligible for free and reduced lunch, clinics should be placed in schools serving 26% of all students; see Lippman et al. 1996, Table 1.7, p. A-9. This would increase the per-pupil spending, averaged for all children, rich and poor, by about \$700.

24 Vandell and Wolfe 2000.

25 Lee, Brooks-Gunn, and Schnur 1988; Currie and Thomas 1995.

26 Garces, Thomas, and Currie 2000; Currie and Thomas 1995.

27 Barnett 1995.

28 NAEYC 1998.

29 NAEYC 1998. The recommendation for professional qualifications for preschool teachers was recently reinforced by Barnett et al. 2004.

30 See, for example, Donahue and Siegelman 1998.

31 Hacsı 2002; Vinovskis 1995.

32 Neuman 2003.

33 Olds et al. 1997; Olds et al. 1999.

34 It would increase average per-pupil costs nationwide by another \$700 per pupil. See note 23, above.

35 Lareau 2002.

36 NIOOST 2000.

37 It would increase average per-pupil costs nationwide by another \$1,400 per pupil. See note 23, above.

38 It would increase average per-pupil costs nationwide by another \$700 per pupil. See note 23, above.

39 Enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools in 2001 was about 48 million (NCES 2003b, Table 37). Spending an additional \$12,500 on 26% of these children would cost about \$156 billion a year.

40 Barnett 1995.

41 Rothstein 1997; Rothstein and Miles 1995.

42 This rough estimate assumes that average per-pupil spending is currently about \$8,000 per pupil, that teacher salary and compensation represents 56% of that amount (NCES 2003b, Table 164), and that a class size reduction of 37% (from 24 to 15) would be applied to the first four of the 13 grades of elementary and secondary education. This calculation does not adjust for the fact that not all students finish high school, and it does not take account of the fact that costs are not identical at each grade level (i.e., it assumes that grades K-3 represent 4/13 of total costs).

43 Citizens for Tax Justice 2003. The total 10-year cost (to 2010) of federal tax cuts enacted from 2001 to 2003 is about \$2.3 trillion, or an average of about \$229 billion annually.

44 Winter 2004. The plaintiffs have proposed funding that, they claim, would enable all students to pass New York State's "Regents" exams, which signify the satisfactory completion of a college preparatory academic curriculum.

About WestEd

Policy Perspectives (www.WestEd.org/policyperspectives) presents visiting authors' own views and/or research on issues relevant to schools and communities nationwide. WestEd welcomes submission of papers on a topic not previously addressed in Policy Perspectives or presenting a different viewpoint to a Policy Perspectives paper already published.

Address drafts and/or inquiries to
Colleen Montoya, Policy Perspectives
Executive Editor, 4665 Lampson Avenue,
Los Alamitos, California, 90720;
562.799.5105; fax, 562.799.5138; or email,
cmontoy@WestEd.org.

WestEd, a nonprofit research, development, and service agency, works with education and other communities to promote excellence, achieve equity, and improve learning for children, youth, and adults. While WestEd serves the states of Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah as one of the nation's Regional Educational Laboratories, our agency's work extends throughout the United States and abroad. It has 15 offices nationwide, from Washington and Boston to Arizona, Southern California, and its headquarters in San Francisco.

For more information about WestEd, visit our Web site: WestEd.org; call 415.565.3000 or toll-free, (877) 4-WestEd; or write: WestEd/730 Harrison Street/San Francisco, CA 94107-1242.

© 2006 WestEd. All rights reserved. Excerpted from *Class and Schools. Using Social, Economic, and Educational Reform to Close the Black-White Achievement Gap* (Teachers College Press, 2004), by Richard Rothstein, by permission of the Economic Policy Institute.

The contents of this report are the sole responsibility of its author and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of WestEd; nor does the mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by WestEd. WestEd is providing this forum for visiting authors and is interested in presenting a wide range of views and/or research.

WestEd®

730 Harrison Street
San Francisco
California 94107-1242
Address service requested