

**ADVANCEMENT  
PROJECT**



**ACTION KIT**

# **STOP CLOSING PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

# WE ARE ON THE BRINK OF A NEW WAVE OF PUBLIC SCHOOL CLOSURES, CAUSED BY PRIVATIZATION AND THE DEFUNDING OF PUBLIC EDUCATION.<sup>1</sup>

This Action Kit provides organizers, families, and community members facing school closures an accessible guide to understanding the harms of closing schools and developing strategies to fight back.

## WHAT ARE SCHOOL CLOSURES?

School closures are the permanent closures of neighborhood public schools, forcing students and families to find new schools to attend. Although school districts often use budget concerns to justify closing neighborhood schools, they disproportionately choose to close schools in low-income Black communities and other communities that have experienced systemic disinvestment, thus further depriving

those communities of the benefits of a neighborhood school.<sup>2</sup> In addition to budget cuts, school districts have used a variety of reasons to justify closing schools in Black communities over other communities—the most common today are that the schools are “under-utilized” and that school building facilities are in the poorest condition.

Nationwide, Black and Latine students disproportionately experience school closures.<sup>3</sup> Although much research and press has focused on school closures in major cities, which impact large numbers of students and families, a larger share of schools closed annually are in rural and suburban communities.<sup>4</sup> Black students disproportionately experience school closures in urban and suburban areas and Latine students disproportionately experience them in rural areas.<sup>5</sup>

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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<b>How We Got Here</b>	<b>04</b>
Background	05
The New Wave Of School Closures	06
How To Spot School Closures	07
Why Does it Matter If Your Neighborhood School Closes?	08
What Leads To School Closures?	09
<b>School Closures Today</b>	<b>11</b>
How Do School Closures Happen?	12
Common Myths About School Closures	14
The Harms Of School Closures	17
<b>Take Action</b>	<b>20</b>
Your District's Arguments To Justify Closing Schools Are Flawed. Here's How To Respond.	21
They Defeated School Closures. You Can Too!	23
If You Think School Closures Are Coming To Your Community...	25
Questions To Direct To School Officials If School Closures Have Already Been Proposed	27

# HOW WE GOT HERE



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## BACKGROUND

### SCHOOL CLOSURES ARE NOT A NEW PHENOMENON.

They happen every year across the country, **disproportionately forcing Black and marginalized communities to move and upend their lives**, regardless of the stated reasons and policy changes that precipitate the closures.

Still, school closures have risen and fallen in waves throughout the history of modern American public education.

One prior wave of school closures was set off by the flight of white families from cities to the suburbs in the 1960s and '70s. As Professor Sally A. Nuamah explained in her book, *Closed for Democracy: How Mass School Closure Undermines the Citizenship of Black Americans*:

The publicly stated reasons for these closures in the 1960s and 1970s are still like those of today. Proponents cited enrollment decline and expected cost savings from consolidated resources. More specifically school districts expected to gain savings from either the lease or sale of high-maintenance buildings. Nonetheless, these cost savings were rarely realized because most of the budget was typically expended on personnel costs, an issue unresolved through the closure of schools.<sup>6</sup>

### SCHOOL CLOSURES NOT ONLY IMPACT URBAN SCHOOL COMMUNITIES; THEY DEVASTATE SMALL RURAL COMMUNITIES TOO.

Mass school closures across rural communities were set off by state-level “consolidation” policies popular in the 1990s and the early 2000s.<sup>7</sup> Through such policies, states set minimum enrollment, academic, or facilities requirements or use grants to incentivize small rural school districts to close schools and consolidate.<sup>8</sup> “Since 1998, more than 6,000 public schools have

closed in rural U.S. counties.”<sup>9</sup> The trend has continued steadily among rural communities experiencing population decline. In 2022, majority Black Inverness and East Sunflower Elementaries in the rural Mississippi Delta were closed because of low enrollment despite overwhelming opposition from their communities.<sup>10</sup>

## THE PASSAGE OF NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND (NCLB) IN 2001 AND THE GREAT RECESSION OF 2008 SET OFF ANOTHER WAVE OF SCHOOL CLOSURES.

During the NCLB era of school closures,<sup>11</sup> school district and elected officials stressed the need to close schools that they deemed “failing”—those serving the highest shares of children in poverty and receiving the fewest resources—while at the same time opening unprecedented numbers of charter schools. For instance, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, the state of Louisiana took over New Orleans’ public schools, fired all teachers, and instituted a charter-only system— one with no neighborhood schools.<sup>12</sup> Since then, New Orleans families have been

forced to endure “an unparalleled amount of school turnover”—as “failing” charter schools are required to close their doors and the already underserved students in those schools bear the academic, emotional, and logistical burdens of finding a new school.<sup>13</sup>

The height of the NCLB-era of school closures was in 2013, when Chicago Public Schools (CPS) closed 50 schools.<sup>14</sup> One of CPS’s justifications for the closures was “under-enrollment”— despite the fact that enrollment had

only decreased marginally since 2000, and that during the same period, “CPS launched an ambitious effort to open new schools (more than 130 since 2004),” many of which “were located in areas experiencing population decline” and where the proposed school closures were.<sup>15</sup> The same year, the Philadelphia Public Schools closed 23 schools, citing almost identical reasons.<sup>16</sup> In both these cities and others with proposed closures, communities fought back, and school closures lost political favorability for a period.

## THE NEW WAVE OF SCHOOL CLOSURES

**The current wave of closures has been set off by several converging forces of divestment in neighborhood public schools that have resulted in enrollment and funding declines.**



**The COVID-19 pandemic** caused declines in public school enrollment. Enrollment in many districts is rebounding, often because of new migration.<sup>17</sup>



**U.S. Supreme Court decisions** enabled states to pass universal voucher laws gutting public education budgets.



**Gentrification**, in which school districts, local governments, and developers pushed low-income people out of their homes, neighborhoods, and schools and replaced them with young professionals who are less likely to have children and families who are less likely to send their children to neighborhood public schools.



**The expiration of federal pandemic relief (ESSER) funding**, which many school districts have been relying on to balance budgets.<sup>18</sup>

Though unprecedented divestment in public education budgets impacts all public schools,

**RECENT NATIONAL RESEARCH ON SCHOOL CLOSURES HAS FOUND THAT, YET AGAIN, THIS LATEST WAVE OF SCHOOL CLOSURES IS DISPROPORTIONATELY HAPPENING TO MAJORITY BLACK COMMUNITIES.<sup>19</sup>**

School districts facing budget constraints, often without conducting robust or even minimal budget analyses, make swift decisions to close schools with lowest enrollments and poorest facilities conditions—the symptoms of historic disinvestment in communities. Thus, while state and federal policies are certainly to blame for school closures, school district leaders make moral decisions to force Black and marginalized families to disproportionately bear the brunt of budget shortfalls, often without adequately assessing the harms that closures cause or the projected cost savings.

## HOW TO SPOT SCHOOL CLOSURES

### “RIGHTSIZING” PLANS

In this new wave of school closures, medium and large-sized school districts typically roll out mass school closures as part of an agenda called “Rightsizing,” a term borrowed from corporate America.<sup>20</sup> Like the name suggests, districts frame these school closure plans as necessary for cost efficiency. And while some districts attempt to sell the plans as equitable, according to academic research, school closures are demonstrably inequitable. They disproportionately happen to majority Black, majority low-income schools, and harm children and families in many ways.

### “CONSOLIDATION” OR “MERGER”

In rural communities, school closures often occur as part of a consolidation of smaller schools or school districts, often required or encouraged by state policy.<sup>21</sup> When families in rural communities lose their neighborhood school, they not only lose an important community hub and employer, children have to travel 30 to 40 minutes by bus to get to school—to other towns where it is burdensome for families to meet school staff and get involved in school communities.<sup>22</sup>



# WHY DOES IT MATTER IF YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD PUBLIC SCHOOL CLOSES?

## **Closing schools deprives communities of a vital resource that their states and districts are responsible to provide.**

- Because of closures, many historically marginalized communities now have no neighborhood schools.
- Neighborhood public schools accept all children, ensuring that families have access to a school close to their home without having to navigate confusing school selection systems or worry about whether their children will be admitted at all.
- Children and families in communities with no schools are forced to travel to other neighborhoods, or in rural areas, to other towns, for an education, to navigate application processes to charter schools or schools with selective admissions, and have no access to a neighborhood community hub.

## **School closures deprive community members access to democratic self-governance of locally controlled schools**

- When communities lose their local public schools, they lose representation on their local school boards and access to local polling stations.
- Parents and guardians of students lose opportunities to become involved in organizations like Parent Teacher Associations and sports boosters, and face more time-consuming, burdensome, and expensive commutes if they wish to visit their child's school.
- Neighborhood schools serve as community centers to meet with neighbors and classmates and hubs of teachers and staff who come from the same communities. While many neighborhood schools do not adequately provide these resources, closing schools eliminates access to those opportunities.

## **School closures discriminate against communities of color**

- Research has repeatedly shown that majority-Black and Latine schools are drastically overrepresented in schools slated for closure.<sup>23</sup>
- The metrics most often used to identify schools for closure—enrollment numbers, academic performance,

and facility quality—target marginalized communities whose schools have been divested from by racist policies, unfair funding schemes, charter schools, and other selective enrollment systems that prioritize superior education for a select few students over providing a high quality education to everyone.

- In making these discriminatory decisions, districts potentially violate state or federal anti-discrimination laws based on race, national origin, and disability status.<sup>24</sup>

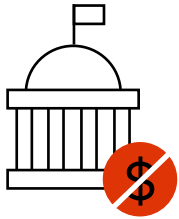
## **School closures are ineffective and inefficient**

- School closures don't make schools "better." Replacing schools with new staff or management models does not address the root causes of unequal student outcomes—systemic disinvestment in schools serving children of color living in poverty.
  - For example, in 2002, Chicago Public Schools closed three elementary schools it deemed "failing" and reopened those schools with new staff. But in 2013, the same three schools were on the list of Chicago's unprecedented closure of 50 neighborhood schools for the same cited reasons.<sup>25</sup> Clearly, the staff were not the problem.
- Analyses of past school closures have revealed that they rarely save money or are the answers to school districts' financial woes.<sup>26</sup>
- Research on past school closures found that they overwhelmingly do not improve student outcomes.<sup>27</sup> A study of Chicago students whose schools closed in 2013 concluded that "academic outcomes were neutral at best, and negative in some instances."<sup>28</sup> The rare instances where students' outcomes improved after closures have only occurred in places where students were transferred to schools with significantly better academic supports and resources than in their prior schools.<sup>29</sup> The vast majority of students whose schools closed, however, were transferred to schools that were comparably resourced.<sup>30</sup>



# WHAT LEADS TO SCHOOL CLOSURES?

School districts usually decide to close the schools that have been most harmed by systemic disinvestment. Here's how it works.



## FEDERAL-LEVEL DISINVESTMENT

- Federal housing policies promoting the demolition of public housing have displaced thousands of families from their communities and schools.<sup>31</sup>
- Federal programs like Race to the Top incentivize school districts to build charter and magnet schools which deplete the resources of neighborhood schools.



## LEADS TO DECREASED RESOURCES FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS

School districts lose funding—and therefore the ability to provide high quality education—when families leave their neighborhoods and schools. Instead of pushing families out of neighborhoods and schools, the federal government should incentivize and fund high resourced, high quality neighborhood schools, for instance by offering grants for sustainable community schools.



## STATE-LEVEL DISINVESTMENT

- Inequitable education funding formulas that tie school district revenue to local property values cause school districts with wealthier tax bases to have more resources.
- The consistent under-funding of public education forces communities to fundraise and provide supplemental contributions to their local schools. This is especially difficult in communities where families have less money to contribute.
- The creation and expansion of charter schools diverts public education funds away from neighborhood public schools.<sup>32</sup>
- State funding of private education through private school vouchers diverts state education funding away from school districts.<sup>33</sup>
- Laws and policies requiring “under-enrolled” district schools to close and convert to charters force school districts to hand over schools to charter operators.
- State funding schemes that incentivize districts to overcount school capacity and invest in school buildings with high “utilization” rates encourage school districts to improve better-resourced schools and neglect those serving the most marginalized communities.



## LEADS TO DECREASED PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

Many school districts across the country have experienced decreased student enrollment and funding.



## DISTRICT-LEVEL DISINVESTMENT

- School boundary lines that concentrate wealth enable public schools in wealthy neighborhoods to gain more resources from wealthy families and their PTAs.
- School “choice” policies exploit existing inequities in the school system and enable families with the means and access to choose what they perceive to be better schools, further harming already under-resourced schools.
- Investment in the creation and construction of *new* schools sold as superior options draws resources away from existing schools already serving people.<sup>34</sup>



## LEADS TO UNEVEN ENROLLMENT AND INVESTMENT ACROSS THE DISTRICT

Well-resourced schools that are seen as desirable by some community members and have high enrollment relative to other, less-resourced schools serve a higher share of the district’s Black students, students living in poverty and students with disabilities.



## LOCAL POLICIES THAT CAUSE AND ACCELERATE GENTRIFICATION

- City plans promoting high-cost housing development and the destruction of subsidized public housing push low-income people out of their neighborhoods.<sup>35</sup>
- Failure to build affordable housing or make housing affordable push low-income people out of their neighborhoods.
- Tax breaks and subsidies for businesses that drain local public education funding (which comes from property taxes) drive up the cost for everyone in the community.<sup>36</sup>



## LEADS TO DECREASED AND UNEVEN PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

Gentrification makes neighborhoods unaffordable for most families, leading to mass population shifts and fewer residents with school-age children. Because of racist perceptions of public schools serving low-income children of color, people with the means to raise families in gentrified neighborhoods are more likely to opt-out of district schools (i.e. choose private or charter schools) or to choose district-run selective schools (i.e. magnet or exam schools).

**School closures themselves also accelerate gentrification.** A recent study based on nationwide data found that “School closures increased the probability that the most segregated Black neighborhoods experienced gentrification . . . and the extent to which these neighborhoods experienced gentrification.”<sup>37</sup>

# SCHOOL CLOSURES TODAY



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# HOW DO SCHOOL CLOSURES HAPPEN?

While specific procedures vary across districts, decisions to close schools generally happen in a similar way:

**1** District leaders and school board members **discuss decreased enrollment and/or budget shortfalls.**

**2** District leaders **jump to the (often inaccurate) conclusion that closing schools will resolve budget woes.**

**3** **Districts hire management consultants to justify their decisions to close schools,** under the veneer that they are only exploring or considering the option.

**Popular consultants include:**

Brian Eschbacher who advocates for closing community schools and opening charter schools, selective public schools, and portfolio enrollment systems.<sup>38</sup>

MGT Consulting (which has now merged with Davis Demographics), which specializes in “facilities master planning,” “strategic planning,” and “large scale turnaround.”

**4** **Consultants conduct an analysis** —often called a “rightsizing study,” “boundary study,” “feasibility study,” or “facilities audit”—ostensibly only to explore the possibility of school closure, **even though they were hired to recommend closures.**

**5** **Consultants conduct a “school utilization” analysis,** which means they divide enrollment numbers at each school by school “capacity”—a measurement that is skewed against older buildings with more classrooms and fewer activity spaces. **The metrics work against schools that have experienced declines in enrollment and are in disrepair due to district, state, and federal disinvestment.**

**6** **Consultants share the results with district leadership** in a presentation.<sup>39</sup>

**7** **District leadership proposes that the school board (or other governing body) vote to close schools** for the following school year.<sup>40</sup> Proposals often include justifications like:

- Budget shortfalls, often without a robust or any analysis of expected cost savings.
- Under-enrollment or under-utilization based on current enrollment rates and often flawed building capacity calculations.
- Projected enrollment declines based on decreased birth rates, which actually only explain a small fraction of overall enrollment trends and fail to account for factors like migration and housing development.<sup>41</sup>
- The need for costly facilities repairs.
- The false claim that closing schools will make the school system more equitable because children at under-resourced schools will have to travel farther to access more resources once their schools are closed.

**8** **There is a period ostensibly allowing for community input on the proposal in the form of public comment, town halls, or hearings**—often with no requirement that district officials take any of the input into account. As a result, community members often feel as if they are not actually being listened to.

**9** **The final decision is made by a school board vote.** Depending on the school district's governance, it may sometimes be made by the mayor, or in the case of a state takeover, an emergency manager or state board of education.<sup>42</sup>

# COMMON MYTHS ABOUT SCHOOL CLOSURES

**Myth:** School closures are necessary because of declining enrollment.

## THE REALITY

### STATE, DISTRICT, AND FEDERAL POLICIES HAVE DIRECTLY CAUSED DECLINING ENROLLMENT.

- Systemic disinvestment causes families with means and access to leave for more resourced schools.
- Charter and voucher policies enable more middle- and upper-class families to leave public schools.
- District policies creating selective public schools rely on and perpetuate some families' perceptions of "good" and "bad" schools and cause decreased enrollment in under-resourced schools.<sup>43</sup>

### "UNDER-ENROLLMENT" IS A CONSTRUCT CREATED BY BUSINESS-MINDED CONSULTANTS WHO DEFINE ENROLLMENT RELATIVE TO OTHER SCHOOLS, NOTIONS OF "EFFICIENCY," AND THEIR IDEAS OF WHAT SCHOOLS SHOULD LOOK LIKE.

- As one Chicago parent observed: "[the] Mayor . . . closed . . . schools in 'low-income neighborhoods' for 'underutilization.' I'm no politician but I do know that schools underutilized are schools underfunded."<sup>44</sup>
- Districts hire consultants to conduct building or feasibility studies and to determine what the enrollment should be for any given school.
- The "utilization" approach is incompatible with the needs of community schools, enrichment, extracurriculars, or special education programs, which all require space outside classrooms.
- Recent enrollment projections are based on deflated COVID enrollment numbers.<sup>45</sup>

### SCHOOL CLOSURES ACCELERATE FURTHER DECLINES IN DISTRICT ENROLLMENT<sup>46</sup> BECAUSE THE NEXT CLOSEST SCHOOL AFTER A NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL CLOSURES IS OFTEN A CHARTER SCHOOL.

- In many cases, closures actually accelerate further declines in enrollment, as families whose local schools close often decide to send their kids to charter schools or other schools close by; sometimes, closed neighborhood school buildings literally turn into charter schools.<sup>47</sup>

### SCHOOL CLOSURES SHOULD BE A LAST RESORT, AS THEY DEMONSTRABLY HARM STUDENTS AND COMMUNITIES. SCHOOL CLOSURES SHOULD ESPECIALLY BE A LAST RESORT FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE ALREADY MARGINALIZED.

- Too often and too soon, districts facing budget constraints turn immediately to school closures instead of considering other options to cut budgets such as terminating contracts with police in schools.

**Myth:** Economic reality leaves districts with no choice but to close schools.

## THE REALITY

### SCHOOL CLOSURES ARE NOT A SOLUTION TO BUDGET DEFICITS.

- School closures rarely save money because they add transportation costs, require continued costs of maintaining empty buildings,<sup>48</sup> and add costs of employing additional staff needed at larger consolidated schools.<sup>49</sup>
- School closures often lead to further decreased enrollment when neighborhoods are left only with charter options, which only further exacerbates any budget shortfalls.
- Instead of just copying its budget from prior year—a lazy “rollover and cut” approach that leaves districts in a bind when revenues are cut—districts should develop priorities based on the expressed needs of school communities, then shape the budget around those priorities and needs.

### BUDGETS ARE MORAL DOCUMENTS.

- A district’s decision to close some schools instead of others due to budget constraints shows the communities it prioritizes. Across the country, districts disproportionately deprioritize marginalized communities of color.<sup>50</sup>

### CLOSING SCHOOLS SHOULD BE A LAST RESORT.

- Districts are often not transparent about their budget needs or about other areas where savings could be found, and choose to spend budgets on police and other things that harm students instead of keeping schools open.

**Myth:** School closures ultimately benefit students.

## THE REALITY

### SCHOOL CLOSURES ACTUALLY HARM STUDENTS AND SCHOOL COMMUNITIES IN A NUMBER OF WAYS.

See *Harms* on page 17.

### EMPIRICAL RESEARCH HAS SHOWN THAT SCHOOL CLOSURES ALMOST ALWAYS HARM OR HAVE NO BENEFIT TO STUDENTS’ ACADEMIC OUTCOMES.<sup>51</sup>

### POLICY ARGUMENTS ABOUT THE IMPACT OF SCHOOL CLOSURES ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND ACCESS TO RESOURCES ARE INACCURATE AND PATRONIZING ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT WHAT IS BEST FOR CHILDREN OF COLOR.

- Students, families, and communities know what they want and what is best for them and deserve self-determination.
- Children of color should not be treated as collateral damage in failed educational experiments.

**Myth:** Schools that are “failing” should be closed.

## THE REALITY

### SCHOOL PERFORMANCE METRICS ARE BIASED.

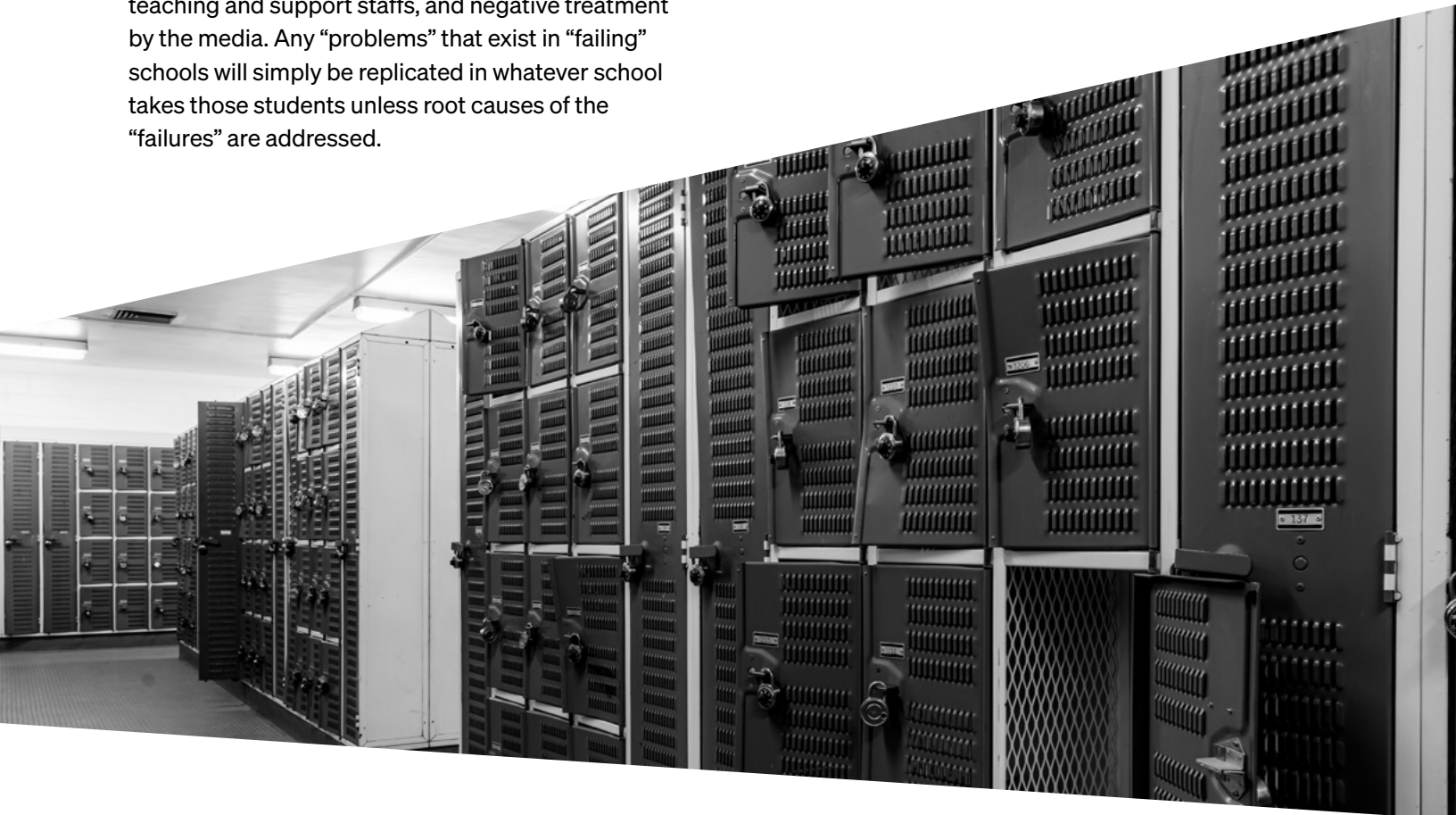
- School performance metrics based on academic measures like test scores are biased against disinvested communities because parent income and school and community resources are the strongest predictors of those measures. Such metrics blame the predictable outcomes of racist disinvestment on those harmed by it.<sup>52</sup>

### MANY CLOSED SCHOOLS ARE CONVERTED INTO NEW CHARTER SCHOOLS

- This exposes the hypocrisy in the argument that schools are not wanted or needed in a community.<sup>53</sup>

### “FAILING” IS DUE TO LIMITED RESOURCES

- Schools are so-called “failing” not because of the particular school buildings or staff, but because of systemic limited resources, programs, depleted teaching and support staffs, and negative treatment by the media. Any “problems” that exist in “failing” schools will simply be replicated in whatever school takes those students unless root causes of the “failures” are addressed.





# THE HARMS OF SCHOOL CLOSURES

The research on school closures and lived experiences of the students and families whose neighborhood schools were closed overwhelmingly shows that school closures are harmful to students and their families, not beneficial.

## SCHOOL CLOSURES ARE HARMFUL TO:



### CHILDREN

**Socioemotional:** Students suffer the stress of adapting to a new school and classroom and the anxiety and distress of creating new social relationships with new peers and new teachers.<sup>54</sup>

**Academic:** Research on school closures has overwhelmingly concluded that it has a neutral or negative impact on students' educational outcomes.<sup>55</sup>



### FAMILIES

**Transportation:** Families are forced to grapple with transportation difficulties, including longer bus rides, accessibility barriers,<sup>56</sup> and sometimes exposure to violence.<sup>57</sup>

**Access to school:** Visiting school and interacting with teachers and staff becomes more difficult for families when their neighborhood school has closed and their new school is far away from home.<sup>58</sup>

**Loss of pride and belonging:** Families lose a sense of pride and belonging if their closed school had previously been open for decades, with generations of families attending it.<sup>59</sup>



### DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION AND SELF-DETERMINATION

After conducting a large-scale study of families impacted by school closures in Chicago and Philadelphia, sociologist Sally A. Nuamah concluded that “Public schools are critical pillars in enabling disenfranchised communities to feel fully human”<sup>60</sup> and experiencing school closures plays a fundamental role “in upholding or undermining the democratic citizenship of Black Americans.”<sup>61</sup>



## COMMUNITIES

**Loss of a community center, pillar, and gathering place:** School closures cause communities to lose a school that is walkable and a social center of the neighborhood. They sometimes leave neighborhoods without any school at all.<sup>62</sup>

**Blight:** School closures can blight a neighborhood and decrease its desirability as a place to live.<sup>63</sup>



## BLACK AND MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

**Impact:** Nationwide, school closures disproportionately occur in Black and marginalized communities of color, and in urban areas, they overwhelmingly do.<sup>64</sup> Those students, staff, families, and community members bear the brunt of closures, losing the benefits of a neighborhood school—staff are members of and connected to the community, families have access to a school that is often walking distance for ease of daily transportation, access to school events, and to visits, and children have access to English learning (EL), special education, and other individualized supports close to home.

**Priorities:** The disproportionate impact of school closures on communities of color reflects the prioritization of “choice” for “better” schools and a lack of concern for supporting existing schools in low-income communities of color.<sup>65</sup>



# SIGNS THAT SCHOOL CLOSURES MAY BE COMING TO YOUR DISTRICT

## DISCUSSIONS OF LOW ENROLLMENT OR “UNDER-UTILIZATION”<sup>66</sup> AMONG DISTRICT OFFICIALS.<sup>67</sup>

**How to find out:** Monitor your school district website, school board meeting agendas, and school board meetings. Look out for:

- **Discussions of budget shortfalls.**
  - For instance, the superintendent of Broward County Public Schools spoke publicly about declining enrollment and the need to cut costs.
- **Terms like “declining birth rates” and “underutilization.”**
  - The districts hires consultants or facilities ‘experts’ to analyze and project enrollment.
- **Studies into “boundaries,” “facilities,” or “enrollment.”**
  - For instance, Grand Rapids School District in Michigan released this video.
- **Formation of a committee to explore “enrollment projections” or “district capacity.”**
  - For instance, Pittsburg Public Schools voted to develop a “Facilities Utilization Plan.” See another example here on the Paso Robles Joint Unified School District website.

## AN INCREASE OF CHARTER SCHOOLS, “CHOICE” OR MAGNET PROGRAMS IN YOUR DISTRICT, WHICH DRAIN RESOURCES FROM YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL.

**How to find out:**

- Monitor the charter authorization body in your district or state for new applications.
- Most charter schools are authorized (granted authority to operate) by the state education department or school district where the charter school is located.<sup>68</sup> Some are authorized by independent authorization boards.
- Monitor your local school board meetings (including meeting minutes and agendas on the website if you can’t make it) for introduction or expansion of “choice” programs.
- Submit a records request to your school district for enrollment and, where applicable, public school admissions data.

## NEW PRIVATE SCHOOL VOUCHER LAWS IN YOUR STATE.

**How to find out:**

- Monitor bills and legislation at your state legislature regarding voucher laws, which are sometimes called 529 accounts, educational savings accounts (ESAs), or tax credit vouchers. A voucher bill and law tracker is available on the Public Funds Public Schools website.

# TAKE ACTION



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# YOUR DISTRICT'S ARGUMENTS TO JUSTIFY CLOSING SCHOOLS ARE FLAWED. HERE'S HOW TO RESPOND.

## YOUR DISTRICT SAYS IT HAS NO CHOICE BUT TO CLOSE SCHOOLS BECAUSE OF BUDGET CUTS. **HOW TO RESPOND** ↓

- **Contradict the misleading message that closing schools will save money.**
  - School closures do not save any meaningful amounts of money unless coupled with massive staff layoffs.<sup>69</sup>
  - School closures often push even more students and families out of district schools to charter schools or voucher schools, exacerbating financial woes.<sup>70</sup>
- **Audit the district budget (and, if necessary, demand that the district make its budget public).**
  - If your district has proposed to close schools without conducting a robust cost analysis or projecting precise savings from closing each school, demand that it do so.
- **Target other expenditures known to harm students—including school police and student surveillance technologies—for cuts instead.**
- **Draw attention to other hypocritical budget decisions.**
  - For instance, a local op-ed in Wichita, KS pointed out that “district officials have spent \$263 million in federal COVID-19 emergency funds, but now say they are short \$42 million and must rush to close six schools before April, without opening their financial records for verification.”<sup>71</sup>
- **Demand a robust equity audit of your district’s school closure proposal before it comes to a vote.**
  - Robust equity audits are conducted by outside partners and analyze equity across multiple categories, including analyzing teacher quality, programmatic equity, and achievement equity. They also include a multi-step implementation process, for instance: (a) creating a committee of relevant stakeholders, (b) presenting the data to the stakeholders and graphing the data, (c) discussing the meaning of the data, (d) discussing potential solutions, (e) implementing solutions, (f) monitoring and evaluating results, and (g) celebrating successes and/or returning to step three of the process.<sup>72</sup>
- **Advocate for your state department of education to provide supplemental funding to keep your schools open.**



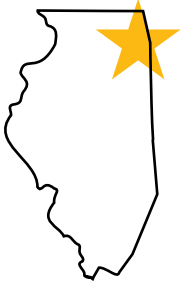
# YOUR DISTRICT SAYS A SCHOOL NEEDS TO CLOSE BECAUSE IT IS “UNDER-ENROLLED.” HOW TO RESPOND ↓

- **Organize a community walk around your school building with a critical eye to the district’s under-enrollment narrative.**
  - If there are any empty classrooms in the building, demand that programs or services that your school doesn’t have be held in those spaces.
  - Share anecdotes from parents and students illustrating that the building does not feel empty or under-utilized.
- **Investigate school enrollment numbers in other neighborhoods.**
  - Your district might support schools with the same enrollment numbers in more affluent neighborhoods with smaller buildings. Point out the hypocrisy.
- **If your school is called “under-enrolled” because the building was expanded over the years to meet enrollment growth, propose that the district instead downsize the building and offer extra space to a community center, after school program, or health center.**
- **Demand that your district invest resources into its “under-enrolled” schools, including by creating sustainable community schools, so that they adequately serve their students and become places where families want to send their children.**
  - *Sustainable Community Schools* provide for strong community voice in the school district by providing engaging and culturally relevant curricula, high quality teaching, wraparound support services, positive discipline and restorative justice, and transformational parent and community engagement. Districts can use community surveys and other tools to identify programs that would meet community needs.
- **Draw attention to new schools or programs that your district has recently opened or plans to open. Demand that the district invest resources in “under-enrolled” schools instead.**
  - For instance, districts can house new specialty programs—like STEM or arts—that are normally offered in selective or magnet schools in “under-enrolled” schools instead, and make them available to all students at the school.

# YOUR DISTRICT SAYS A SCHOOL NEEDS TO CLOSE BECAUSE THE BUILDING IS IN POOR CONDITION. HOW TO RESPOND ↓

- **Point out recent school building improvements at other schools or proposed improvements to other facilities.**
  - Argue that the schools in your community have not had their fair share compared to other school buildings in the district.
- **Point to any state aid that was distributed inequitably among the schools in your district in recent years.**
  - Argue that your community’s schools did not get a fair share.
- **Demand that the school district do a long range educational facility master plan that addresses historic structural bias in the capital projects and student assignment.**
- **If district leaders argue that closing your school would be “equitable,” refute this claim.**
  - Closing schools that serve the most marginalized students is inherently inequitable.
  - Demand that the district repair your school building or build a new building for your community in your neighborhood.
- **Reiterate your responses to the district’s budget cut justifications.**

# THEY DEFEATED SCHOOL CLOSURES. YOU CAN TOO!



## CHICAGO 2013

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) announced the closure of 50 schools—all in historically Black communities—because of “underutilization.”<sup>73</sup> It was the “single largest incidence of school closures by a district in a single year in US history.”<sup>74</sup> But with support of the Journey for Justice Alliance, the community of Walter H. Dyett High School in Bronzeville fought back. After receiving news of the possible closure in 2011, teachers, students, parents, and community members took action:

In 2012, they staged sit-ins and several were arrested for peaceably refusing to leave City Hall. Thirty-six students filed a federal civil rights complaint with the U.S. Department of Education alleging that closing Dyett reflected racially discriminatory practices. In 2013, several groups came together and formed the Coalition to Revitalize Dyett, a partnership of community organizers, representatives from the Chicago Teachers Union and Teachers for Social Justice, professors from the University of Illinois at Chicago, and organizational partners such as the DuSable Museum of African American History and the Chicago Botanic Gardens. The coalition developed a plan to keep Dyett open, which it submitted unsolicited to [the] new CEO [of Chicago Public Schools]. They proposed that Dyett be a high school focused on “global leadership and green technology,” with a focus on environmental sustainability, social justice, and 21st century careers, to be known as Dyett Global Leadership and Green Technology High School.<sup>75</sup>

Despite all their efforts, at the end of the school year in 2015, CPS shuttered Dyett’s doors.<sup>76</sup> But the Dyett community did not give up. In September 2015, 12 community activists staged a hunger strike.<sup>77</sup> As hunger striker and community organizer Jitu Brown articulated:

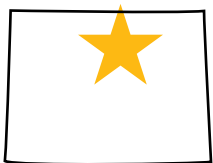
**“WE’RE TIRED OF OUR CHILDREN AND OUR COMMUNITIES BEING DEMONIZED AND BEING BLAMED FOR BEING UNDER-SERVED.”<sup>78</sup>**

**Eight days later, CPS announced that Dyett would be reopened as an open-enrollment arts high school, featuring an “innovation technology lab.”<sup>79</sup> The hunger strike continued.**

After 34 days and two hospitalizations, hunger striker Monique Redeaux-Smith announced that the strike would come to an end:

*“While we cannot yet claim complete victory, we do understand that our efforts so far have been victorious in a number of ways. . . . Through community resistance, [Dyett] was slated to be reopened in 2016–17. And even though there was a request for proposals, we know that the plan for that space was to become another privatized school within Bronzeville. But again, with community resistance and this hunger strike, we pushed CPS and the mayor to commit to reopening Dyett as a public, open-enrollment neighborhood school. And that is a victory.”<sup>80</sup>*

**Although the hunger strikers had won a victory for Dyett, the communities of the 49 other schools closed in Chicago that year were not so fortunate. Along with suffering the loss of pillars of the community, communities grappled with accelerated population loss, and continued declines in enrollment at their new schools.<sup>81</sup>**



## DENVER 2022

After the superintendent of Denver Public Schools proposed closing 19 schools, all in communities of color, Movimiento Poder, a parent and student-led organization focused on the needs of the community of southwest Denver, organized in opposition to the closure of community schools. Advancement Project partnered with Movimiento Poder to write an opposition [letter](#) to the Denver Public Schools Board of Education, and thanks to Movimiento Poder's organizing, the Board voted against the proposal to close schools.



## OAKLAND 2022

In February 2022, Oakland Unified School District ("OUSD") proposed the closure of seven schools, potentially harming thousands of OUSD students, parents, and teachers. A coalition of impacted stakeholders formed to fight back, including OUSD educators going on a hunger strike. In April 2022, parents and students of schools slated for closure, represented by the ACLU of Northern California, sent a [40-page complaint](#) to California's Attorney General, alleging that OUSD's proposal resulted in a racially disparate impact on Black and Brown families. The complaint also provided important historical context to the school closure proposal, applicable to school closure decisions across the country from the NCLB-era to today. The coalition has been able to stave off school closures in the district.



# IF YOU THINK SCHOOL CLOSURES ARE COMING TO YOUR COMMUNITY . . .

- **Reach out** to Advancement Project for support.
- **Show up to school board meetings and any other public planning meetings to monitor for yellow flags and discussions of closures or “rightsizing.”** Use time for public comment to combat the common and false narrative that school closures are necessary and would save money. Also ask:
  - Has the district yet tried implementing resources or programs that would attract more students to your school?
  - If enrichment programs are getting set up at other schools, or if the district has plans to open new schools, why not bring those programs to this school that’s already here?
  - What other cost-savings alternatives has the district tried and/or is trying?
- **Get ahead of the narrative.** Publish materials online and on social media and speak publicly to contradict the district’s false messaging that school closures are their only choice or that they will make education more equitable. *See next page for examples.*
- **If your district hires a school closure consultant,** draw attention to the consultant’s biased agenda and demand an equity audit from a different source.
- **If school district officials claim they are facing budget shortfalls,** demand that the budget and budget projections be released to the public.
- Get to know how your school district makes decisions about school closures and **develop a plan to hold officials accountable** during the decision-making process.
  - Find out who has the final say on school closures. It is typically a school board vote, but may be different in your district.
  - Find out if there is already a school board policy or state law in place governing the process for closing schools.
- **Demand resources for your school and draw attention to the district’s prioritization of resources for other schools,** including “gifted,” bilingual, or other special academic programs that make those schools attractive to parents.
  - If the district is expanding its school choice programs or opening new magnet/specialty schools, ask why they aren’t putting those academically rigorous programs in your school.





## GETTING AHEAD OF THE NARRATIVE

Organizers at 412 Justice in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania discovered that Pittsburgh Public Schools was initiating a Facility Utilization Plan with the intention to close schools, though no district officials stated the intention publicly. **412 Justice shifted the narrative, explicitly naming that the plan meant school closures before anyone from the district would say so publicly.** 412 Justice rallied community members to show up to a school board meeting to speak out against closures, distributed [talking points](#), and sent a [letter](#) to school district officials. Because of these efforts, members of the press began calling the Facility Utilization Plan a plan that would “close schools” instead of parroting the district’s vague language.<sup>82</sup> **Putting the public on notice that the district is trying to close schools has enabled school communities more time to build resistance strategies.**

**An advocate in Wichita, Kansas wrote an [op-ed](#) in a local news outlet challenging the District’s justifications for proposed closures, including “declining enrollment”**

*“... district officials [have not] verified the urgency [of closing schools]. For example, there were 47,129 students enrolled in 2016-17. This year there are 47,174. Twenty years ago in 2003-04, there were 40,068 students. So there’s no enrollment decline.”*

**At a community meeting with Chicago Public Schools officials who characterized some schools as “underutilized,” one parent said:**

*“I’d really like to see the actual formula [for utilization] that’s being used, because from what we’re hearing anecdotally, and what we’re seeing ... schools that are supposedly so underutilized don’t feel that way to the people in the building.”<sup>83</sup>*

# QUESTIONS TO DIRECT TO SCHOOL OFFICIALS IF SCHOOL CLOSURES HAVE ALREADY BEEN PROPOSED

## IF “UNDER-ENROLLMENT” OR “UNDER-UTILIZATION” IS A REASON ↓

- What enrollment figures is the district citing? If it is citing figures from 2020–2022 school years, why rely on unrepresentative data that fail to account for enrollment stabilization that is slowly returning in the wake of the COVID-19 lockdown?
- Has the district tried implementing resources or programs that would attract more students to the school?
- If enrichment programs are getting set up at other schools, why not here at this school?
- Has the district considered new migration to the area in enrollment projections?
- Has the district considered plans for any new housing development in enrollment projections?
- How was “utilization” calculated?
  - Was it based on school capacity?
  - If so, who calculated school capacity? How was it calculated? When was it last calculated?

## IF COSTS ARE A REASON, HAS THE DISTRICT ↓

- Conducted a robust budget analysis and price comparison to see exactly how much would be saved by closing a school building?
- Tried other cost-savings alternatives before resorting to the drastic measure of school closures?
- Shared the budget for the public to scrutinize and account for budget priorities?

## HOW WERE THESE SCHOOLS PICKED FOR CLOSURE? ↓

- What specific metrics were used to determine which schools should be closed?
- Are the metrics used all tied to symptoms of disinvestment (like enrollment, academic performance, and building quality)?
- Has the district considered the role schools play in their communities as a metric?
- Were these metrics consistently applied across the district?
- Has the district provided the public with those specific metrics as applied to schools across the district?

## WHO WOULD BE IMPACTED BY THE CLOSURES? ↓

- Has the district conducted an equity analysis or audit and shared with the public whose schools would be closed, broken down by race, parent income, disability, and English Learner status?<sup>64</sup>

# WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Saving your schools from closure is one step to retaining and then strengthening community control and transforming your community's schools into well-resourced, welcoming, nurturing, liberatory places that empower and serve the needs of your community and ensure that all students thrive.

## GET HELP

Is your district showing signs that it might be considering closing your school? Has it slated your school for possible closure or is studying the possibility of closing your school?

Reach out to Advancement Project at  
[SchoolClosures@advancementproject.org](mailto:SchoolClosures@advancementproject.org)



# ENDNOTES

1. See, e.g., Mark Lieberman, *Pressure to Close Schools Is Ramping Up. What Districts Need to Know*, EDUCATION WEEK (Jan. 24, 2024) <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/pressure-to-close-schools-is-ramping-up-what-districts-need-to-know/2024/01>; Andrew Prokop, *The conservative push for “school choice” has had its most successful year ever*, VOX (Sept. 11, 2023); Laura Meckler and Hannah Natanson, *More states are paying to send children to private and religious schools*, WASHINGTON POST (Feb. 8, 2023), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2023/02/08/school-choice-vouchers-private-religious-school-huckabee-sanders/>; <https://www.vox.com/politics/23689496/school-choice-education-savings-accounts-american-federation-children>; Laura Meckler and Hannah Natanson, *More states are paying to send children to private and religious schools*, WASHINGTON POST (Feb. 8, 2023), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2023/02/08/school-choice-vouchers-private-religious-school-huckabee-sanders/>.
2. See *id.*; see also Francis A. Pearman et al., *Examining racial (in)equity in school-closure patterns in California* (Working paper) (2023), [https://edpolicyinca.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/wp\\_pearman\\_sept2023.pdf](https://edpolicyinca.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/wp_pearman_sept2023.pdf) (finding that “Schools enrolling higher proportions of Black students are at significantly increased risk of closure relative to those enrolling fewer Black students, a pattern that is more pronounced in California than elsewhere in the United States.”); Rachel Weber et al., *Predicting School Closures in an Era of Austerity: The Case of Chicago*, 56 URB. AFFAIRS REV., 415 (2020) [https://cuppa.uic.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2020/10/CV2020\\_without-service.pdf](https://cuppa.uic.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2020/10/CV2020_without-service.pdf) (finding that percentage of Black students in a school was the largest predictor of school closures in Newark and Philadelphia).
3. See, e.g., Spector, *supra.*; *Subtracting Schools from Communities*, URBAN INSTITUTE (Mar. 23, 2017), <https://www.urban.org/features/subtracting-schools-communities> (finding that “school closures disproportionately affect Black students and poor students.”); CHUNPING HAN ET AL., *LIGHTS OFF: PRACTICE AND IMPACT OF CLOSING LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS*, CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON EDUCATION OUTCOMES at 4 (2017), [https://credo.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/closure\\_final\\_volume\\_i.pdf](https://credo.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/closure_final_volume_i.pdf) (“low-performing schools with a larger share of black and Hispanic students were more likely to be closed than similarly performing schools with a smaller share of disadvantaged minority students”).
4. Eve L. Ewing and Terrance L. Green, *Beyond the Headlines: Trends and Future Directions in the School Closure Literature*, 51 EDUCATIONAL RESEARCHER 58 (Oct. 13, 2021), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/0013189X211050944>.
5. *Subtracting Schools from Communities*, URBAN INSTITUTE (Mar. 23, 2017), <https://www.urban.org/features/subtracting-schools-communities> (“[R]ural schools that close have slightly lower shares of white students and slightly higher shares of Hispanic students than rural schools that do not close.”).
6. SALLY A. NUAMAH, *CLOSED FOR DEMOCRACY: HOW MASS SCHOOL CLOSURE UNDERMINES THE CITIZENSHIP OF BLACK AMERICANS* at 7 (2023).
7. See Mara Casey Tieken, *Close a Rural School, Hurt a Rural Community*, THE DAILY YONDER (Aug. 14, 2017), <https://dailyyonder.com/close-rural-school-hurt-rural-community/2017/08/14/>.
8. *Id.*
9. Joseph Sageman, *School Closures and Rural Population Decline*, 87 RURAL PSYCHOLOGY 960 (Mar. 17, 2022), <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/ruso.12437>.
10. See Bryan Davis, *SCCSD Board Of Trustees Votes To Close Two Of The County's Elementary Schools*, Enterprise-Tocsin (Jan. 20, 2022), <https://www.enterprise-tocsin.com/node/130692>.
11. See National Center for Education Statistics, *Closed Schools* <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=619>, (displaying total number of schools closed nationwide, by year, from 2010–2022).
12. See Education Week, *School Choice and Charters Project, The Re-Education of New Orleans* (2015), <https://www.edweek.org/policy-politics/the-re-education-of-new-orleans>.
13. See, e.g., Molly F. Gordon et al., *School Closings in Chicago Staff and Student Experiences and Academic Outcomes*, U. Chicago Consortium on School Research at 6 (2018), <https://consortium.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/2018-10/School%20Closings%20in%20Chicago-May2018-Consortium.pdf> (“Interviews with affected students and staff revealed major challenges with logistics, relationships, and school culture.”); Arianna Prothero, *When Choice Doesn't Feel Like a Choice*, Education Week (Aug. 19, 2015), <https://www.edweek.org/policy-politics/when-choice-doesnt-feel-like-a-choice/2015/08>.
14. See Becky Vevea, *Chicago closed 50 schools 10 years ago. What's happened since then?*, CHALKBEAT (Jul. 25, 2023), <https://www.chalkbeat.org/chicago/2023/7/25/23806124/chicago-school-closings-2013-henson-elementary/#:~:text=That%20day%20would%20mark%20the,would%20leave%20the%20district%20altogether>.
15. Becky Vevea and Linda Lutton, *Fact check: Chicago school closings*, WBEZ CHICAGO (May 16, 2023), <https://www.wbez.org/stories/fact-check-chicago-school-closings/81734980-e9fb-4c05-8605-af207b43d8c9>.
16. See Jon Hurdle, *Philadelphia Officials Vote to Close 23 Schools*, NYTIMES (Mar. 7, 2013), <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/08/education/philadelphia-officials-vote-to-close-23-schools.html>.
17. See Sofoklis Goulas, *Breaking Down Enrollment Declines in Public Schools*, The Hamilton Project (March 2024), [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/20240314\\_THP\\_EnrollmentDeclines\\_Paper.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/20240314_THP_EnrollmentDeclines_Paper.pdf) (“Enrollment in public schools was relatively steady between 2021–22 and 2022–23, but the number of K–12 students remained below 2019–20 levels and the pre-pandemic trend.”); Linda Jacobson, *Exclusive Data: Thousands of Schools at Risk of Closing Due to Enrollment Loss*, 74 MILLION (Jan. 9, 2024), [https://www.the74million.org/article/exclusive-data-thousands-of-schools-at-risk-of-closing-due-to-enrollment-loss/?utm\\_source=The+74+Million+Newsletter&utm\\_campaign=294dc3f21f-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2022\\_07\\_27\\_07\\_47\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_077b986842-294dc3f21f-176112633](https://www.the74million.org/article/exclusive-data-thousands-of-schools-at-risk-of-closing-due-to-enrollment-loss/?utm_source=The+74+Million+Newsletter&utm_campaign=294dc3f21f-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2022_07_27_07_47_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_077b986842-294dc3f21f-176112633); National Center for Education Statistics, *Enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools, by level and grade: Selected years, fall 1980 through fall 2031*, [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d22/tables/dt22\\_2031o.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d22/tables/dt22_2031o.asp); Linda Jacobsen, *As the Pandemic Set In, Charter Schools Saw Their Highest Enrollment Growth Since 2015*, 42-State Analysis Shows, THE 74MILLION (Sept. 22, 2021), [https://www.the74million.org/as-the-pandemic-set-in-charter-schools-saw-their-highest-enrollment-growth-since-2015-42-state-analysis-shows/?utm\\_source=The+74+Million+Newsletter&utm\\_campaign=df6abfd69d-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2022\\_07\\_27\\_07\\_47\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_077b986842-df6abfd69d-177344268](https://www.the74million.org/as-the-pandemic-set-in-charter-schools-saw-their-highest-enrollment-growth-since-2015-42-state-analysis-shows/?utm_source=The+74+Million+Newsletter&utm_campaign=df6abfd69d-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2022_07_27_07_47_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_077b986842-df6abfd69d-177344268). School districts across the country are receiving surges in enrollment numbers as migrant families move in. See, e.g., Cuneyt Dil, D.C. *public schools scramble amid migrant student influx*, AXIOS (Oct. 31, 2023), <https://www.axios.com/local/washington-dc/2023/10/31/public-schools-migrants-immigrants-students> (Washington, D.C.); Brian Sherrod, *Denver Public Schools superintendent to respond to continuous enrollment of migrant students*, CBS NEWS (Jan. 25, 2024), <https://www.cbsnews.com/colorado/news/denver-public-schools-superintendent-continuous-enrollment-migrant-students/> (Denver); Becky Vevea & Reema Amin, *Chicago Public Schools enrollment climbs as more migrant families arrive*, CHALKBEAT (Feb 8, 2024), <https://www.chalkbeat.org/chicago/2024/02/08/chicago-public-schools-sees-more-migrant-students/> (Chicago); Ivan Pereira, *New York City's rise in migrant students spurs calls for more services, outreach*, ABC NEWS (Sept. 6, 2023), <https://abcnews.go.com/US/new-york-citys-rise-migrant-students-spurs-calls/story?id=102967104>.
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19. See Carrie Spector, *Majority-Black schools outpace others in school closures nationwide*, Stanford analysis shows, STANFORD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION (October 19, 2023) <https://ed.stanford.edu/news/majority-black-schools-outpace-others-school-closures-nationwide-stanford-analysis-shows> (2023 study of school closures nationwide found that “majority-Black schools, which make up roughly 10 percent of the overall U.S. public school population, were more than three times as likely to close as non-majority Black schools.”).

# ENDNOTES (CONT.)

20. See Tim Walker, *How Closing Schools Traumatizes Students and Communities*, NEA TODAY (May 19, 2019), <https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/how-closing-schools-traumatizes-students-and-communities>.
21. See Mara Casey Tiekens, *Close a Rural School, Hurt a Rural Community*, THE DAILY YONDER (Aug. 14, 2017), <https://dailyyonder.com/close-rural-school-hurt-rural-community/2017/08/14/>.
22. *Subtracting Schools from Communities*, URBAN INSTITUTE (Mar. 23, 2017), <https://www.urban.org/features/subtracting-schools-communities> (“Only 8 percent of closed schools are fully replaced with a school that serves the same grade levels within the community”).
23. See, e.g., Spector, *supra*; CHUNPING HAN ET AL., LIGHTS OFF: PRACTICE AND IMPACT OF CLOSING LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS, CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON EDUCATION OUTCOMES at 43 (2017), [https://credo.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/closure\\_final\\_volume\\_i.pdf](https://credo.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/closure_final_volume_i.pdf) (“Evidence of minority bias surfaced from our analysis. Figure 24 illustrates that for all low-performing schools, those of higher minority were significantly more slated to be closed than lower-minority ones in both charter and [traditional public school] sectors.”).
24. For instance, numerous groups have filed Title VI complaints based on the racially disproportionate impact of school closures. See, e.g., Title VI Complaint against Jefferson Parish School Board (Apr. 24, 2023), [https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/20230424\\_ltr\\_to\\_ocr\\_doe\\_final.pdf](https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/20230424_ltr_to_ocr_doe_final.pdf). Other groups have challenged school closures in court based on federal and state civil rights claims. See, e.g., Katherine Gladson & Candace Moore, *School Closing Victory—The Fight to Save National Teachers Academy*, AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION (Mar. 22, 2019), <https://www.americanbar.org/groups/litigation/resources/newsletters/childrens-rights/school-closing-victory-the-fight-save-national-teachers-academy/>. Finally, the California attorney general’s investigation of the Oakland Unified School District’s decision to close schools for violation of state civil rights laws concluded that the decision should be rescinded. See Cal. DOJ, *Oakland Unified School District’s Legal Duty to Follow Assembly Bill 1912, Prevent Disproportionate Harm, and Alleviate Segregation as it Plans Whether to Close, Merge, or Consolidate Schools in School Year 2025-2026* (Jan. 29, 2024), [https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/attachments/press-docs/CalDOJ\\_LettertoOaklandUnifedRePotentialClosures.129.24.final\\_.pdf](https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/attachments/press-docs/CalDOJ_LettertoOaklandUnifedRePotentialClosures.129.24.final_.pdf).
25. See Valerie Strauss, *The biggest irony in Chicago’s mass closing of schools*, WASHINGTON POST (May 30, 2023), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2013/05/30/the-biggest-irony-in-chicagos-mass-closing-of-schools/>.
26. See, e.g., Marguerite Roza & Aashish Dhammani, *Closing schools: How much money does it save, and is it worth it?*, EDSOURCE (Mar. 3, 2024), <https://edsources.org/2024/closing-schools-how-much-money-does-it-save-and-is-it-worth-it/706903#:~:text=At%20Economics%20Lab%2C%20our%20rule,budget%2C%20mostly%20in%20labor%20costs> (“our rule of thumb is that when a district has under-enrolled schools, closing 1 of every 15 schools saves about 4% of a district’s budget, mostly in labor costs.”); Stephanie Farmer & Rachel Weber, *Education Reform And Financialization: Making the Fiscal Crisis of the Schools*, 46 INTERNAT’L J. OF URB. & REGIONAL RESEARCH 907 (Nov. 2022), <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/1468-2427.13137> (arguing that school districts’ austerity measures, far from creating financial stability, do little or nothing to resolve fiscal crises exacerbated by debt from investment in building new (often charter) schools); PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS, *CLOSING PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN PHILADELPHIA LESSONS FROM SIX URBAN DISTRICTS* (Oct. 19, 2011), [https://www.pewtrusts.org/-/media/legacy/uploadedfiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/reports/philadelphia\\_research\\_initiative/closingpublicschoolsphiladelphia.pdf](https://www.pewtrusts.org/-/media/legacy/uploadedfiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/reports/philadelphia_research_initiative/closingpublicschoolsphiladelphia.pdf) (in study of six urban school districts, concluding that “The money saved as the result of closing schools, at least in the short run, has been relatively small in the context of big-city school-district budgets, with the largest savings achieved when closings were combined with large-scale layoffs.”).
27. See, e.g., Matt Barnum, *17 studies that tell us something about how school closures affect students*, CHALKBEAT (Feb. 5, 2019), <https://www.chalkbeat.org/2019/2/5/21106771/17-studies-that-tell-us-something-about-how-school-closures-affect-students/#:~:text=Three%20years%20after%20schools%20are,schools%20just%20avoid%20mandatory%20closure> (national study of closures in 26 states between 2006 and 2012 found that “closure of low-performing schools somewhat hampered academic progress for the average student.”).
28. GORDON et al., *supra* at 6.
29. See Barnum, *supra* (“Closure students who attended better schools tended to make greater academic gains than did their peers from not-closed low-performing schools in the same sector, while those ending up in worse or equivalent schools had weaker academic growth than their peers in comparable low-performing settings.”).
30. See CHUNPING HAN et al., *supra* at 5 (noting that “the academic benefit of closure is systematically constrained, as the supply of superior alternatives for closure students is limited and there are systemic access challenges such as parent information and district placement practices.”); JENNIFER R. COWHY et al., *SCHOOL CLOSINGS IN CHICAGO; UNDERSTANDING FAMILIES’ CHOICES AND CONSTRAINTS FOR NEW SCHOOL ENROLLMENT* UCHICAGO CONSORTIUM ON SCHOOL RESEARCH (2015), <https://consortium.uchicago.edu/publications/school-closings-chicago-understanding-families-choices-and-constraints-new-school> (in study following Chicago’s mass closures, finding that “[n] early all displaced students ended up in schools with higher performance ratings than the schools they had previously attended (93 percent), though most of these schools were not substantially higher performing”).
31. See, e.g., FANNIE MAE FOUNDATION, *HOUSING IN THE NATION’S CAPITAL* (2006) <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/housing-nations-capital-2006> (The District of Columbia developed a plan for “new communities” that aimed to “transform distressed subsidized housing . . . to develop new, mixed income housing”).
32. For instance, in the state of Colorado, where three large school districts are facing school closures, drops in enrollment have corresponded with an increase in charter school enrollment. See Melanie Asmar, Yesenia Robles, Cam Rodriguez and Thomas Wilburn, *Where are the kids? Colorado school enrollment trends shed light on closure discussions*, CHALKBEAT (Nov. 9, 2022), <https://co.chalkbeat.org/2022/11/9/23450225/takeaways-enrollment-analysis-schools-closing-jeffco-denver-aurora-census-data>.
33. See Thomas S. Dee, *Where the Kids Went: Nonpublic Schooling and Demographic Change during the Pandemic Exodus from Public Schools*, 125 Teachers College Record 119 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0161468123119020> (finding that increased enrollment in private schools since the onset of the pandemic explain about 14 percent of the overall decline in public school enrollment).
34. See Stephanie Farmer & Rachel Weber, *Education Reform And Financialization: Making the Fiscal Crisis of the Schools*, 46 INTERNAT’L J. OF URB. & REGIONAL RESEARCH 907 (Nov. 2022), <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/1468-2427.13137> (positing that Chicago Public Schools’s building spree despite ongoing declines in school enrollment was a major driver of the financial crisis that precipitated mass school closures in 2013).
35. See Derek Hyra, *Commentary: Causes and the Future of Equitable Development Policy* at 172 (2016), <https://www.american.edu/spa/metro-policy/upload/hyra-2016-cityscape-proofs.pdf>.
36. See Christine Wen et al., *Students lose out as cities and states give billions in property tax breaks to businesses – draining school budgets and especially hurting the poorest students*, The Conversation (Feb. 15, 2024), <https://theconversation.com/students-lose-out-as-cities-and-states-give-billions-in-property-tax-breaks-to-businesses-draining-school-budgets-and-especially-hurting-the-poorest-students-222940> (“At the local level, tax abatements and exemptions often come at the cost of critical funding for school districts that disproportionately serve students from low-income households and who are racial minorities.”); see also *Subtracting Schools from Communities*, URBAN INSTITUTE (Mar. 23, 2017), <https://www.urban.org/features/subtracting-schools-communities> (noting that the state of Maryland handed out \$600 million in subsidies to encourage development in Baltimore while the school district faced a \$130 million deficit).
37. See Francis A. Pearman & Danielle Marie Greene, *School Closures and the Gentrification of the Black Metropolis*, Center for Education and Policy Analysis Working Paper No. 21-02 (Feb. 2022), <https://cepa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/wp21-02-v020222.pdf>.

# ENDNOTES (CONT.)

38. Eschbacher is an outspoken proponent of the school portfolio model and sees school closures as an inevitable and necessary collateral outcome of it. See e.g., Brian Eschbacher, Enrollment Case Study: Denver Public Schools at slide 13 (May 2020) Opining that closing “failing” schools in Denver increased options for residents and allowed for socioeconomically diverse schools; Brian Eschbacher, *Eschbacher: 5 Things Districts Can Do to Keep Ahead of Population Changes — and Avoid Enrollment, Planning and Budgetary Disasters*, THE 74MILLION (Nov. 19, 2019), <https://www.the74million.org/article/eschbacher-5-things-districts-can-do-to-keep-ahead-of-population-changes-and-avoid-enrollment-planning-and-budgetary-disasters/> (recommending that school districts “operate both school openings and closures consistently and logically, so districts have the right amount and types of schools in the right places to best serve all students” and “help impacted students” whose schools have closed to “attend a higher-quality school, many schools are offering an opportunity ticket to improve students’ options through school choice.”); Eschbacher Consulting, Podcast: Empowering Parent Voice Through School Choice, <https://www.eschbacher.education/evidence/2018/10/28/podcast-empowering-parent-voice-through-school-choice/> (“We discuss . . . how market principles apply to education, and how the sense of community can be altered by choice.”). Eschbacher frequently advocates for preemptive “rightsizing” based on decreases in enrollment or even expected decreases and has consulted for districts and charters across the country, including in Denver, San Antonio, Atlanta, Austin, Cleveland, Fort Worth, Indianapolis, Nashville, New Orleans, and Oakland. See Brian Eschbacher, Denver Enrollment Landscape at slide 2 (2022) <https://rootedenver.org/wp-content/uploads/Denver-Enrollment-Overview-for-RootED-Denver-.pdf>.
39. See examples from [San Antonio](#), [Jefferson Parish](#), [Salt Lake City](#), and [Moon Area School District in Pennsylvania](#).
40. See examples of such presentations from [Denver, Colorado](#) and [Jackson, Mississippi](#).
41. One recent nationally representative study found that birth rates and increases in homeschooling explain approximately 26 percent of the decrease in public school enrollment, while increased enrollment in private schools explains about 14 percent. Thus, the study’s author noted, about 40 percent of the change in public school enrollment is yet unaccounted for—unexplained by birthrates, homeschooling, or private school enrollment. See Thomas S. Dee, *Where the Kids Went: Nonpublic Schooling and Demographic Change during the Pandemic Exodus from Public Schools*, 125 Teachers College Record 119 (2023), <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED629226>.
42. In districts that have been taken over by the state, the decision is typically made by an appointed emergency manager. For instance, the school district in Gary, Indiana, which was taken over by the state in 2017, is governed by the Indiana Distressed Unit Appeals Board and is managed by the consulting company MGT Consulting. Dan Carden, *Lawmakers reminded of dismal Gary school finances prior to state takeover*, NORTHWEST INDIANA TIMES (Jul. 11, 2023), [https://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/education/lawmakers-reminded-of-dismal-gary-school-finances-prior-to-state-takeover/article\\_fe15a0da-baec-561b-bf01-efeb547235c.html](https://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/education/lawmakers-reminded-of-dismal-gary-school-finances-prior-to-state-takeover/article_fe15a0da-baec-561b-bf01-efeb547235c.html).
43. See, e.g., Melanie Asmar, Yesenia Robles, Cam Rodriguez and Thomas Wilburn, *Where are the kids? Colorado school enrollment trends shed light on closure discussions*, CHALKBEAT (Nov. 9, 2022), <https://co.chalkbeat.org/2022/11/9/23450225/takeaways-enrollment-analysis-schools-closing-jeffco-denver-aurora-census-data>.
44. SALLY A. NUAMAH, CLOSED FOR DEMOCRACY: HOW MASS SCHOOL CLOSURE UNDERMINES THE CITIZENSHIP OF BLACK AMERICANS at 85 (2023).
45. See Brian Eschbacher, Phase 2 Landscape Analysis Presentation, Jan. 9, 2023 at slide 10, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qhg6Wb\\_hVsi&ab\\_channel=SanAntonioISD](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qhg6Wb_hVsi&ab_channel=SanAntonioISD) (explaining enrollment projections based on prior 3 years only).
46. For instance, enrollment continued to decline after mass school closures in Chicago Public Schools. See Nader Issa, Lauren FitzPatrick & Sarah Karp, *10 years after mass CPS school closings, enrollment is even worse. What can be done?*, CHICAGO SUN TIMES, <https://graphics.suntimes.com/education/2023/chicagos-50-closed-schools/looking-ahead/>.
47. See Rob Harris, *Jeffco Public Schools Board of Education votes to close two K-8 schools*, ABC7 (Oct. 12, 2023), <https://www.denver7.com/news/local-news/jeffco-public-schools-board-of-education-votes-to-close-two-k-8-schools/> (“Coal Creek Canyon K-8 is also set to close July 2024, provided a charter school alternative is approved.”); Yesenia Robles, *Jeffco board votes to close two more schools amid enrollment decline*, CHALKBEAT (Oct. 12, 2023), <https://co.chalkbeat.org/2023/10/12/23915246/jeffco-k8-school-closing-board-vote-coal-creek-arvada-parents/> (“District leaders have said that although they believe it is not sustainable for them to continue operating that school, which is currently serving fewer than 100 students, they think a charter school may be more successful.”).
48. See Terrance Green, *4 Things Everyone Should Know about School Closures*, UT NEWS (Oct. 14, 2019), <https://news.utexas.edu/2019/10/14/4-things-everyone-should-know-about-school-closures/>. See also Nader Issa et al., *10 years after mass CPS school closings, enrollment is even worse. What can be done?*, CHICAGO SUN TIMES (2023), <https://graphics.suntimes.com/education/2023/chicagos-50-closed-schools/looking-ahead/> (noting that 10 years after Chicago Public Schools’ mass school closures, the district “still has to deal with vacant buildings left over from past closings, including 26 from 2013, 16 of them still government-owned”).
49. National Education Policy Center, *Should We Question the Purposed Benefits of School Closures?* (Mar. 8, 2022), <https://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/newsletter-oakland-03082022> (“A 2011 NEPC brief by Craig Howley, Jerry Johnson and Jennifer Petrie of Ohio University finds that, rather than saving money through economies of scale, school and district consolidation may actually increase costs. For example, even if a district is able to eliminate a principal position by consolidating two small schools, it may end up hiring multiple assistant principals to staff the resulting larger school.”).
50. A recent study of school closures across the country found that “majority-Black schools . . . were more than three times as likely to close as non-majority Black schools.” See Spector, *supra*.
51. Specifically, studies have repeatedly shown that students’ outcomes were harmed by school closures if those students transitioned to a similarly situated and resourced school. Although there has been some research showing that students gained academically if they moved to a higher performing school, students whose schools are closed overwhelmingly are moved into similarly performing schools. See, e.g., Matt Barnum, *17 studies that tell us something about how school closures affect students*, CHALKBEAT (Feb. 5, 2019), [https://www.chalkbeat.org/2019/2/5/21106771/17-studies-that-tell-us-something-about-how-school-closures-affect-students/#:~:text=Three%20years%20after%20schools%20are,schools%20just%20avoid%20mandatory%20closure](https://www.chalkbeat.org/2019/2/5/21106771/17-studies-that-tell-us-something-about-how-school-closures-affect-students/#:~:text=Three%20years%20after%20schools%20are,schools%20just%20avoid%20mandatory%20closure;); Terrance Green, *4 Things Everyone Should Know about School Closures*, UT NEWS (Oct. 14, 2019), <https://news.utexas.edu/2019/10/14/4-things-everyone-should-know-about-school-closures/>.
52. See, e.g., ED100, *Poverty and Race: How Do Students’ Backgrounds Affect Their School Performance?*, <https://ed100.org/lessons/poverty>; Louis Freedburg, *Poverty levels in schools key determinant of achievement gaps, not racial or ethnic composition, study finds*, EDSOURCE (Sept. 23, 2019), <https://edsources.org/2019/poverty-levels-in-schools-key-determinant-of-achievement-gaps-not-racial-or-ethnic-composition-study-finds/617821>.
53. For instance, in 2017, the District of Columbia assessed its 85 public school buildings that it had previously closed and determined that 40 of those buildings were occupied by charter schools. See D.C. Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education, *Citywide Landscape of Formerly Closed DCPS Facilities* (2017), [https://dme.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dme/publication/attachments/Formally%20Closed%20DCPS%20Facility%20Landscape\\_as%20of%20SY1617\\_FINAL\\_Updated%20July2017\\_Q.pdf](https://dme.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dme/publication/attachments/Formally%20Closed%20DCPS%20Facility%20Landscape_as%20of%20SY1617_FINAL_Updated%20July2017_Q.pdf).
54. See Becky Vevea, *Chicago closed 50 schools 10 years ago. What’s happened since then?*, CHALKBEAT (Jul. 25, 2023), <https://chicago.chalkbeat.org/2023/7/25/23806124/chicago-school-closings-2013-henson-elementary>; Sarah Karp, *After 10 years, Chicago school closings have left big holes, and promises unkept*, WBEZ CHICAGO (Jun. 1, 2023), <https://www.npr.org/2023/06/01/1178727834/after-10-years-chicago-school-closings-have-left-big-holes-and-promises-unkept>.
55. A 2017 study of the impact of school closures in 26 states concluded that students whose schools had been closed who “attended better schools tended to make greater academic gains than did their peers from not-closed low-performing schools in the same sector, while those ending up in worse or equivalent schools had weaker academic growth than their peers in comparable low performing settings” but noted that “the academic benefit of closure is systematically constrained, as the supply of superior alternatives for closure students

# ENDNOTES (CONT.)

- is limited and there are systemic access challenges such as parent information and district placement practices.” CHUNPING HAN ET AL., LIGHTS OFF: PRACTICE AND IMPACT OF CLOSING LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS, CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON EDUCATION OUTCOMES (2017), [https://credo.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/closure\\_final\\_volume\\_i.pdf](https://credo.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/closure_final_volume_i.pdf).
56. A 2022 study found “significant difference in absentee records” between students who rode the bus for more than 30 minutes to get to school and students whose bus rides were shorter. See Williamena Kwapo, *Study Links Longer School Bus Rides to Chronic Absenteeism*, EDUCATION WEEK (Jun 16, 2022), <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/study-links-longer-school-bus-rides-to-chronic-absenteeism/2022/06>.
57. See, e.g., CHICAGOLAND RESEARCHERS AND ADVOCATES FOR TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION, CREATE RESEARCH BRIEF ON SCHOOL CLOSURES (2013), <https://www.academia.edu/3095217/ResearchBriefonSchoolClosuresbyCREATE>.
58. See Monique Alexander & Vanessa A. Massaro, *School deserts: Visualizing the death of the neighborhood school*, 18 POLICY FUTURES IN EDUC., 787–805, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1478210320951063> (“Students who are not local to their school face a range of challenges in attending school and participating in extracurricular activities. It also becomes more difficult for parents to participate in school activities and build community around their children.”) (citing prior research).
59. See EVE L. EWING, GHOSTS IN THE SCHOOLYARD: RACISM AND SCHOOL CLOSINGS ON CHICAGO’S SOUTH SIDE AT 127 (2018) (School closures are “much more than the loss of an interchangeable building. It can be a harbinger of things to come, the culmination of multiple generations of racism and injustice and a blatant disregard of the fundamental reality within which a community understands itself”).
60. NUAMAH, *supra* at 130.
61. *Id.* at 137.
62. For instance, in San Antonio, schools closed in 2023 left some neighborhoods without any public schools. See *Across Texas, communities fight to defend public education*, LIBERATION (Oct. 14, 2023), <https://www.liberationnews.org/across-texas-communities-fight-to-defend-public-education/> (“Some neighborhoods will be left with no public schools, which may result in pushing students to charter schools.”).
63. See, e.g., Nichole Currie, *From schools to scourge: Why 7 Philly schools remain empty 5 years after going on the auction block*, WHY? (May 2, 2019), <https://why.org/articles/from-schools-to-scourge-why-7-philly-schools-remain-empty-5-years-after-going-on-the-auction-block/>.
64. This was true both in the NCLB-era of school closures, see JOURNEY FOR JUSTICE ALLIANCE, DEATH BY A THOUSAND CUTS (2014) at 1; CHUNPING HAN ET AL. at 4 (study found that “low-performing schools with a larger share of black and Hispanic students were more likely to be closed than similarly performing schools with a smaller share of disadvantaged minority students”); *Subtracting Schools from Communities*, URBAN INSTITUTE (Mar. 23, 2017), <https://www.urban.org/features/subtracting-schools-communities> (“Though black students are about 31 percent of the population in continually open urban schools, they make up 61 percent of the population in closed urban schools.”), and now in this post-COVID privatization era. See Spector, *supra*; Francis A. Pearman, et al., *Examining racial (In)Equity in school-closure patterns in California* (Working paper), POLICY ANALYSIS FOR CALIFORNIA EDUCATION (Sept. 2023) <https://edpolicyinca.org/publications/examining-racial-inequity-school-closure-patterns-california> (“Schools enrolling higher proportions of Black students are at significantly increased risk of closure relative to those enrolling fewer Black students, a pattern that is more pronounced in California than elsewhere in the United States. This study also finds that conventional explanations for school closures—such as declining enrollments, poverty rates, and achievement differences—cannot fully account for why schools enrolling larger shares of Black students have greater odds of closure.”). For instance, in Denver last year, “[i]n]e of the 10 schools originally recommended for closure primarily serve Black and Latino students and those from low-income families.” Melanie Asmar, *5 Denver schools removed from closure recommendation — for now*, CHALKBEAT (Nov. 10, 2022), <https://co.chalkbeat.org/2022/11/10/23452617/denver-school-closure-five-schools-temporarily-spared#:~:text=Nine%20of%20the%2010%20schools,students%20last%20year%20were%20white>.
65. See also Southern Poverty Law Center, Title VI Complaint against Jefferson Parish School District (Apr. 24, 2023), [https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/20230424\\_ltr\\_to\\_ocr\\_doe\\_final.pdf](https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/20230424_ltr_to_ocr_doe_final.pdf).
66. See National Education Policy Center, *Should We Question the Purposed Benefits of School Closures?* (Mar. 8, 2022), <https://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/newsletter-oakland-03082022> (“Because most school funding is allotted on a per-pupil basis, enrollment declines lead to funding declines.”).
67. See Chad Aldeman, *With More Teachers & Fewer Students, Districts Are Set up for Financial Trouble*, THE 74 MILLION (Oct. 2, 2023), <https://www.the74million.org/article/with-more-teachers-fewer-students-districts-are-set-up-for-financial-trouble/>.
68. See Jamison White, *How Are Charter Schools Held Accountable?*, National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (Dec. 6, 2022), <https://data.publiccharters.org/digest/charter-school-data-digest/who-authorizes-charter-schools/>.
69. See, e.g., Marguerite Roza & Aashish Dhammani, *Closing schools: How much money does it save, and is it worth it?*, EDSOURCE (Mar. 3, 2024), <https://edsources.org/2024/closing-schools-how-much-money-does-it-save-and-is-it-worth-it/706903#:~:text=At%20Edunomics%20lab%2C%20our%20rule,budget%2C%20mostly%20in%20labor%20costs> (“our rule of thumb is that when a district has under-enrolled schools, closing 1 of every 15 schools saves about 4% of a district’s budget, mostly in labor costs.”); PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS, CLOSING PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN PHILADELPHIA LESSONS FROM SIX URBAN DISTRICTS (Oct. 19, 2011), [https://www.pewtrusts.org/-/media/legacy/uploadedfiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/reports/philadelphia\\_research\\_initiative/closingpublicschoolsphiladelphia.pdf](https://www.pewtrusts.org/-/media/legacy/uploadedfiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/reports/philadelphia_research_initiative/closingpublicschoolsphiladelphia.pdf) (in study of six urban school districts, concluding that “The money saved as the result of closing schools, at least in the short run, has been relatively small in the context of big-city school-district budgets, with the largest savings achieved when closings were combined with large-scale layoffs.”)
70. See Stephanie Farmer & Rachel Weber, *Education Reform And Financialization: Making the Fiscal Crisis of the Schools*, 46 INTERNAT’L J. OF URB. & REGIONAL RESEARCH 907 (Nov. 2022), <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/1468-2427.13137> (arguing that school districts’ austerity measures, far from creating financial stability, do little or nothing to resolve fiscal crises exacerbated by debt from investment in building new (often charter) schools).
71. Walt Chappell, *Wichita school closing plan unlawful, unjustified, says former state board member*, WICHITA EAGLE (Feb. 20, 2024), <https://www.kansas.com/opinion/guest-commentary/article285691831.html#storylink=cpy>.
72. Two prominent equity audit frameworks were developed by Linda Skrla, et al., see *Using Equity Audits to Create Equitable and Excellent Schools* (2009), and Colleen A. Capper & Michelle D. Young. See *The Equity Audit as the Core of Leading Increasingly Diverse Schools and Districts, Leadership for Increasingly Diverse Schools* (George Theoharis & Martin Scanlan eds. 2015).
73. NUAMAH, *supra* at 85.
74. *Id.*
75. Eve L. Ewing, *The Fight for Dyett: How a Community in Chicago Saved Its Public School*, AMERICAN EDUCATOR (Spring 2019), <https://www.aft.org/ae/spring2019/ewing>.
76. *Id.*



# ENDNOTES (CONT.)

77. See Valerie Strauss, *Fight in Chicago: The all-too familiar story of school closures in America's cities*, WASHINGTON POST (Sept. 5, 2015), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2015/09/05/fight-in-chicago-the-all-too-familiar-story-of-school-closures-in-americas-cities/>.
78. *Id.*
79. Eve L. Ewing, *The Fight for Dyett: How a Community in Chicago Saved Its Public School*, AMERICAN EDUCATOR (Spring 2019), <https://www.aft.org/ae/spring2019/ewing>.
80. *Id.*
81. See Sarah Karp et al., *After 10 years, Chicago school closings have left big holes, and promises unkept*, WBEZ Chicago (Jun. 1, 2023), <https://www.npr.org/2023/06/01/1178727834/after-10-years-chicago-school-closings-have-left-big-holes-and-promises-unkept>.
82. See, e.g., Bob Mayo, *Activists argue Pittsburgh school board resolution foreshadows school closings*, WTAE (Jan. 23, 2024), <https://www.wtae.com/article/pps-school-board-consolidations-parents/46510884>; Megan Shinn, *Pittsburgh Public Schools Board to vote on "Facilities Utilization Plan" that could close some schools*, CBS PITTSBURGH (Jan. 24, 2024), <https://www.cbsnews.com/pittsburgh/news/pittsburgh-public-schools-board-possible-school-closure-plan/>.
83. Zoe Pharo, *Local parents share maintenance needs, budget frustration at Chicago Public Schools roundtable*, HYDE PARK HERALD (Feb.18, 2024), [https://www.hpherald.com/evening\\_digest/local-parents-share-maintenance-needs-budget-frustration-at-chicago-public-schools-roundtable/article\\_a3e54a86-c9ff-11ee-b2df-0b38c8493a64.html](https://www.hpherald.com/evening_digest/local-parents-share-maintenance-needs-budget-frustration-at-chicago-public-schools-roundtable/article_a3e54a86-c9ff-11ee-b2df-0b38c8493a64.html).
84. For instance, in September 2022, California passed a law mandating a community engagement process and equity analysis before districts decide to enact school closures, mergers or consolidations because of financial distress. See Cal. Ed. Code, § 41329, subd. (b). April 2023, California's attorney general issued a guidance to superintendents and board of education members detailing how to carry out the processes. See Guidance Regarding Laws Governing School Closures and Best Practices for Implementation in California (Apr. 11, 2023), <https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/media/letter-school-districts-school-closures-04112023.pdf>.

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