WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The movement for school desegregation and equity in Hartford, Connecticut.
# Table of Contents

I. What is the story of integration in Hartford? 3
   - A History of Segregation 4
   - A Case for Connecticut 9
   - The Plan 11
   - The Impact 12

II. Why school integration? 13
   - Improving Academic Outcomes 14
   - Building Community & Capacity 15
   - Standing for Social Justice 16

III. What’s happening now? 17

IV. Where do we go from here? 21

V. How can I be part of building integration? 27
What is the story of integration?
A HISTORY OF SEGREGATION: JIM CROW LAWS

What were Jim Crow Laws?

- The Jim Crow laws were a nickname for the segregationist laws that originated in the 1860s in several Southern and Midwestern states.

- Jim Crow laws included a series of rules, codes and statutes that legally separated the Black community from the white community.

- The intention was to treat Black citizens as a separate, second class and to keep many of the oppressive, racist social structures from slavery.

- The Black community was forced to use schools, hospitals, and other public services that were separate and unequal. Additionally, the laws legitimized criminalizing and even killing Black people who stood up against segregation.

- While many Northern states did not have Jim Crow laws, they had other informal rules or policies that intentionally separated Black and white people. For example, in these states, local governments would often intentionally draw school zones to segregate Black and white students.
A History of Segregation: Schools

- From the 1860s through 1960s, Black students were kept in separate and unequal schools around the country through Jim Crow Laws and redlining policies.
- While some states explicitly named some schools “White” and “Colored” schools, others created districts that kept students of colors separate from white students and required that they attend school in their district.
- Many of these districts lines still exist today.

- Segregation did not just happen in states with Jim Crow laws.
- All around the country, students of color from many different backgrounds were forced to attend segregated schools through different laws, policies, and practices.

Asian American Students
In the 1930s and 1940s, many states segregated East Asian students from white students. The laws were justified with harmful stereotypes about the political allegiances of the Asian community.

Native American Students
In the 17th - 18th centuries Native American children were forcibly removed from their families and sent to “Indian Residential Schools.” Students were abused and forced to cut their hair and abandon their tribal language and culture.

Latinx Students
Latinx and immigrant students were separated into different schools and taught how to do manual labor instead of academics. In 1947, the Mendez v. Westminster case in California challenged these practices as unconstitutional.
A History of Segregation: Redlining Connecticut Neighborhoods

1940s - 1950s

- Federal, state, and local authorities intentionally built most of the public housing developments for Black people in northeastern Hartford.
- Those same authorities built public housing for white people elsewhere.
- The government gave cheaper mortgage loans to white people who would move out of Hartford and into all-white suburbs.
- Black or Latinx people were locked out of those same suburbs by ‘redlining’.
- The government refused to back home loans for people of color buying in the suburbs.

This map painted Northeast Hartford with a “red line”. A red line meant a community presented a “fourth degree” of risk. “Fourth degree” communities were labeled “hazardous” due to the number of Black, Latinx, or immigrant residents. The government would not back home loans in “hazardous” communities. This made it very difficult to own property in “redlined” communities. It was nearly impossible for Black and Latinx residents in redlined communities to get a home loan.
A History of Segregation: Redlining Connecticut School Districts

1909
- Connecticut issued a law that required all children to attend schools within the district in which they reside. Connecticut General Statutes § 10-184.
- The state kept this law on the books as it continued to redline.

1941
- Connecticut issued another law that set the borders of school districts to line up with town boundaries. Connecticut General Statutes § 10-240.
- Keeping these laws meant that the redlined boundaries of the City of Hartford and its school district were almost the same.

1990s
- 91% of students in Hartford were Black or Latinx. The suburbs were almost all-white.
- Students were required to attend schools in their district. Districts were unequally funded.

Photo Credit: Records of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland
A history of Segregation: Brown v. Board of Education

- In 1954 the Supreme Court ruled in Brown v. Board of Education that racially segregated schools violated the Constitution because “separate” is “inherently unequal.”
- In separate and unequal schools, there is not equal protection of the law of the constitution.
- Social scientists conducted experiments where children in segregated schools were shown dolls of different races. Black children believed that the Black dolls were inferior to the white dolls.
- The Court relied on this evidence to understand how increasing resources wasn’t enough. The Court saw public education as a part of developing citizenship, which requires children of all races to be exposed to and learn from each other.
In 1989...

Thirty years ago, seventeen public school students and their families filed Sheff v. O'Neill, a lawsuit against the State of Connecticut, arguing that Black and Latinx students in Hartford public schools were being denied an education equal to that of their white counterparts in suburban school districts due to segregation and economic disparities between Hartford schools and those in the nearby suburbs.
1989
Elizabeth Horton Sheff and other parents sue Governor O'Neill for separate and unequal education between Hartford and the suburbs.

1996
Sheff wins! Connecticut Supreme Court rules separate and unequal education is against the state constitution. There's just one problem - how to fix it.

1997
Legislature passes a three part solution:
1) A five-year takeover of the school district
2) An expansion of early childhood education
3) The creation of a voluntary magnet and transfer program to integrate the schools

2003
The House of Representatives votes 87-60 to approve an out-of-court settlement in the Sheff v. O'Neill case, which includes plans for eight new integrated magnet schools in Hartford.

2016
From 2003 until 2016, the Sheff remedies operated pursuant to a series of stipulations between the Sheff parties. Today, the Sheff remedies have resulted in significant progress.

2018
As of 2017-2018 school year, a total of 18,963 students attend the over 40 magnet schools managed by the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC), the Hartford school district, several of the suburban districts, and numerous other operators. Another 2,300 students participate in Open Choice and attend 140 public and technical schools in 27 different districts.

This progress is a direct result of Sheff.
The Story of Integration in Hartford: The Plan

The Application
Students wishing to attend Open Choice and magnet schools complete an application. An application process considers many factors, including students’ home address, school preference, and sibling placement to determine school placement.

Open Choice
The Sheff remedy also dramatically expanded the Open Choice Program, which allows Hartford students to attend suburban non-magnet schools and suburban students to attend Hartford non-magnet schools.

Magnet Schools
Today, as part of the Sheff remedy, the State has created over 40 high-quality, integrated schools in Hartford and the suburbs. Schools located in Hartford and surrounding towns have specialized educational themes. Both Hartford and suburban resident students attend these schools together, making them more diverse, providing an improved, dynamic education for all.

Photo Credit: Breaking B.R.E.A.D.
The Story of Integration in Hartford:

**The Impact**

Sheff v. O’Neill does...

- ...join students together across lines of race, class, and geography: About 19,000 students from Hartford and surrounding suburbs attend over 40 magnet schools in the Hartford region.
- ...create opportunities for Hartford and suburban students to attend high-quality, award-winning schools with specialized themes, including the arts, engineering, math, and more.
- ...reduce the significant achievement/opportunity gap between Black and Latinx students and white students in Connecticut.
- ...provide opportunities for Hartford students to attend district schools in surrounding towns through Open Choice and vice versa.

Sheff v. O’Neill does not...

- ...use the race of an applicant as a factor in the magnet school or Open Choice application process. The system that determines placement considers many factors, including address, whether siblings already attend magnet schools, and more.
- ...take money away from public schools. Magnet schools are funded from sources that exist for diverse public school programs. Thanks to Sheff v. O’Neill, billions of additional dollars have been spent on education in the Hartford region that would not have existed otherwise.
- ...deny individual students because of race. Integration standards for magnet schools help to make sure that the schools remain integrated. Black and Latinx students from Hartford are more likely to receive placements.

Photo Credit: Breakfast Love (440)
Why school integration?
Why Integration?:
Improving Academic Outcomes

Integration has been shown to reduce the achievement gap across identity.

It brings a whole new unique learning opportunity when these people meet in one space.

Exposure to different backgrounds can improve cognitive and problem solving skills.

Integration can build skills that help students better navigate future opportunities in our global economy.
Why Integration?
Building Community & Capacity

One of the future benefits of diverse classrooms is that students learn how to work across differences with more empathy.

It allows you to just be sensitive more to the cultures that exist within our country.

Kids need to learn to treat each other equally!

We are better together than we are apart.

Photo Credit: Listen2Parents
Photo Credit: Sheff Coalition
Why Integration?
STANDING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Racially diverse classrooms help to end the inequities and reduce harmful biases that result from an education system built upon systemic racism.

Photo Credit: Sheff Coalition
What's happening now?
What’s happening now?:

Still Fighting for Sheff

- In the ongoing Sheff litigation, plaintiffs continue to advocate that the state must lift the caps on magnet schools and increase the number of seats so that every student who applies is admitted to a magnet or Open Choice school.
- The Sheff plaintiffs and lawyers are also pushing for increased teacher diversity, greater equity in access to educational opportunities within schools, and increased investment in Hartford neighborhood schools.
- Finally, the Sheff plaintiffs and lawyers are fighting against the efforts of the Pacific Legal Foundation to resegregate Hartford schools in the Robinson v. Wentzell lawsuit.
Increasing Opportunity

- Because magnet schools are so popular, there are many more students who apply to attend than there are available seats!
- Additionally, because of a lack of adequate funding to meet the demand for magnet schools from the State of Connecticut, some schools do not operate at their full capacities.
- An increase in funding for magnet schools, and the creation of more magnet schools, would help to make sure that all students who wish to attend a high-quality, integrated school are able to do so.

Expanding Access

- Black and Latinx students from Hartford are more likely to be admitted to a magnet school and less likely to remain on the waitlist.
- For the 2017-2018 school-year, there were over 10,000 students who remained on the waitlist for magnet schools. Of those, approximately 5,200 were white and Asian students from the suburbs; 3,600 were Black and Latinx students from Hartford.
- The demand for the higher quality education in integrated school programs proves that these schools should be expanded and replicated by the state.
What's happening now?:

Robinson v. Wentzell

A Lawsuit Threatens a Groundbreaking School-Desegregation Case


By Rachel M. Cohen

The Case

Robinson v. Wentzell is a federal lawsuit that could end efforts to integrate Hartford-area schools. The Pacific Legal Foundation—a conservative California law firm—took on the case. They argue that the Hartford lottery discriminates based on race. This is not true. The lottery does not use an individual’s race as a factor. Instead, the lottery considers the racial demographics of neighborhoods. The “reduced isolation standard” is a measure that the State uses to look at the racial makeup of a magnet school after the lottery has happened, and to measure whether the magnet schools are integrated. Hartford students generally have a higher likelihood of getting into magnet schools than students from the suburbs.

The Risk

If Hartford were to abandon the Sheff remedies, Hartford schools would again become highly segregated, as they were before the Sheff decision. Not only does this go against the basic principles of Brown v. Board of Education, but data has repeatedly shown that racially integrated schools lead to better educational outcomes for students.

The Response

Recognizing the implications Robinson would have on Sheff, LDF represented plaintiffs who intervened in Robinson. They asked the federal court to dismiss the new lawsuit because the Sheff litigation is still ongoing.
Where do we go from here?
Where do we go from here?: Enrollment?

We need to continue our fight for more state funding and resources, so we can provide more access to our magnet schools. So that every child has the opportunity to attend any school of their choosing and that school will be high performing.
I have noticed, being from Hartford, that ... that individual students don’t have the same resources... we need to make sure that everyone has equal opportunities.

Many students do not have the same resources or exposure to the same things as students in better funded schools or towns. This directly impacts our learning outcomes.
Where do we go from here?

Teacher representation

We need a diverse teaching staff and administration that reflects the diverse backgrounds of our students and communities.

Photo Credit: Breaking B.R.E.A.D.
Bias is based on misconceptions, and having diverse relationships in the classroom can help challenge those misconceptions.

We need to send a message that there is no tolerance for explicit racial bias against our kids in their schools.

Having a diverse education means what we learn is diverse.
WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Restorative Justice

We need to address differences in discipline rates between white students and students of color that result in the school-to-prison pipeline and replace traditional discipline with restorative justice practices that build community.”
How can I be part of building School Integration in Hartford?

Fill out this form to get connected!

To speak with students of Breaking B.R.E.A.D., email: aaebreakingbread@gmail.com

To speak with parents of Listen2Parents
- Visit: www.listen2parents.org (Live 3/18!)
- Email: Keilani.Hughes@Listen2Parents.org
These materials were created by Sarah Camiscoli for LDF with contributions from students, teachers, parents, and community leaders from Breaking B.R.E.A.D., CREC Academy of Aerospace and Engineering, Hartford Public High School, Great Path Academy, Suffield High School, the CREC Parent Senate, North Haven High School, Renzulli Academy, Listen2Parents, the NAACP of Greater Hartford, and the Sheff Movement Coalition.