

## LOCAL NEWS

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### Researchers: Minorities get poor schooling in the suburbs

by Kay Lazar

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Black and Latino students in Boston's suburbs live in poorer neighborhoods and are routinely attending schools with higher concentrations of poverty than their white and Asian counterparts - and the gap is growing, according to a wide-ranging report released yesterday at Harvard University.

"Living separately means living unequally . . . going to unequal schools," said John Logan, director of the Lewis Mumford Center at the University of Albany and co-author of the new report.

"Schools with high levels of poverty have shown, in study after study, difficulty in raising achievement levels," Logan said.

"This is in everybody's self-interest" to address the disparity, Logan added, because minorities account for the fastest-growing portion of the population in Massachusetts and nationally.

The report, released with Harvard's Civil Rights Project, details an "extreme concentration of white children" in Boston's suburbs - widely defined as stretching as far north as Lawrence, west to Worcester and Fitchburg and south to New Bedford - where 85 percent of children are white.

Yet, the report states, the average black and Hispanic children outside Boston are in poorer neighborhoods where more than one-third of other children are black and Hispanic - a number three or four times higher than their population in the region.

The report called Greater Boston "clearly out of step with the rest of the nation," where 40 percent or more of minorities now live in suburbs.

"Our goal (in releasing the report) is to try to create a metropolitan consciousness," said Gary Orfield, co-director of the Civil Rights Project. Orfield said the project will be releasing more studies over the next six months at community meetings around the state to spur debate about policy solutions.

One solution, said co-author Logan, is to target suburban Boston's "discriminatory" zoning laws that, he said, lead to segregated and unequal schools.

On that point, Rep. Jarret Barrios (D-Cambridge) agrees.

"Segregation, by itself, doesn't mean inequality, but in Massachusetts, segregation always comes along with unequal access to quality education," he said.

"This (report) highlights the importance of protecting cost effective and efficient means of producing affordable housing in suburban communities," Barrios said, "most importantly protecting (anti-snob zoning) from critics who would do away with it and all the value it has brought to thousands of poor Massachusetts families."

But state Board of Education member Abigail Thernstrom called the report and its conclusions of separate and unequal education "flawed."

"Why is it that the quality of education depends on the number of white kids in the classroom? I regard that as a troubling assumption," she said.

Thernstrom and her husband, Harvard history professor Stephan Thernstrom, are poised to release a new book this month about America's racial "achievement gap" in education.

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