Racial and Economic Diversity in US Public Montessori Schools
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Abstract: As public Montessori expands rapidly in the United States, this study presents empirical findings from a dataset created to evaluate the racial and economic diversity of public Montessori schools. The findings demonstrate that public Montessori has strengths in student racial and socio-economic diversity, but also challenges, particularly among Montessori charters. It total, whole school public Montessori schools educate a majority of students of color (54%), a larger proportion than US public schools, and a disproportionately higher number of Black students. Public Montessori students are more likely to attend schools that are racially diverse in comparison to their public school peers, particularly Black and Latino public Montessori students. At the same time, public Montessori students are slightly more economically advantaged than their public school peers. There are significant diversity differences between Montessori district/magnet and charter schools, with fewer charter schools being racially and economically diverse. In addition, the majority of public Montessori schools enroll fewer students of color and low-income students than their surrounding districts. While this can reduce racial isolation in urban districts, it can also indicate that enrollment practices exclude certain student populations. Finally, public Montessori’s racial and economic diversity is changing. Data over the last 10 years indicates that public Montessori schools are serving more White, Latino and free and reduced lunch eligible students than ever before, while growth among Black students has remained stagnant. The study concludes with successful strategies public Montessori schools can use to recruit a racially and economically diverse student body.

Key words: diverse schools, public Montessori, low-income students, students of color, magnet, charter

Introduction

Public Montessori schools have historically appealed to families across racial and economic backgrounds. The earliest whole school public Montessori programs were developed in the 1970s as part of desegregation initiatives in Cincinnati, Ohio; Kansas City, Missouri; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. More recently, cities such as Cambridge, MA, Hartford, Connecticut, and

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Grand Rapids, Michigan and Fort Wayne, Indiana have successfully used this same strategy to create racial diversity in urban school districts (NCMPS 2014b).

At the same time, recent opposition to new or expanded public Montessori programs in cities including San Francisco and Santa Cruz, California, Salem, Oregon, North Charleston, South Carolina and Memphis, Tennessee has been led by families of color, defined here as people who identify as Black, Latino, Asian, Native-American, Pacific Islander, or multiracial. These families have charged that public Montessori is for middle class White families (Bowers 2013, Bowers 2014, Brown 2012, Burnette 2014, Cobb and Glass 2009, Gadson-Birch 2014, McCord 2012, Shapiro 2013, Wong 2014). During particularly impassioned public testimony around creating a public Montessori school in San Francisco, a Black mother at the school passionately argued, “Our kids need structure. We cannot be with this free flow, do what you want to do, kind of thing happening.[...] Don’t put it to the African Americans, it’s not for us.” (Krasny 2009). Is this perception of Montessori as incompatible and unavailable to students of color born out by the data? While other research examines the efficacy of Montessori for students of color, this study focuses on the racial and economic diversity of public Montessori in schools across the country.

This study finds that Public Montessori schools as a sector have high levels of racial and economic diversity, particularly in contrast to school resegregation around the country (Orfield, Kucsera and Siegel-Hawley 2012). In 2012-13, students of color comprised fifty-four percent of public Montessori school enrollment, and were overrepresented by 5% in comparison to national public school enrollments. Black students in particular were overrepresented in Montessori by 11% in comparison to the national public school enrollment. Over half of public Montessori school students attended a racially diverse school compared with 39% of all public school
students. Black and Latino Montessori students were also more likely to attend a racially diverse school than their counterparts nationwide. Such diversity, however, varies by school and between magnet and charter Montessori schools. Charter schools are tuition free and receive a charter and funding from the state, but are run by private groups. Magnet schools are part of a school district, though like charters they are also schools that parents must voluntarily select. Charter Montessori schools are growing at a rapid pace and are less racially and economically diverse than their district and magnet counterparts, leading to an overall public Montessori population with increasing numbers of White, Latino and free and reduced lunch eligible students, but an unchanging number of Black students. Given these trends, public Montessori educators and policy educators must be proactive to maintain school diversity, or risk confirming “charges of elitism and privilege” (Shapiro 2012).

**Literature Review**

Research has long established clear academic and social gains for all students attending racially and economically diverse schools, but despite this evidence, American public schools have been resegregating over the last twenty-five years. Students attending racially diverse schools have higher achievement overall (US Department of Education (USDOE) 2015) and specifically in mathematics (Berends and Penaloza 2010, Newton 2010), literacy (Benson and Borman 2010) and build more expansive social networks (Braddock and Gonzalez 2010, Goldsmith 2010, Stuart Wells et al. 2009, Wells, Fox and Cordova-Cobo 2016). Others have argued that maintaining school diversity is a critical component of the American democratic system (Hochschild and Scovronick 2003). Yet over the last twenty-five years, the school desegregation gains of the Civil Rights era have moved in reverse, and school segregation is now
increasing around the country (Orfield, Kucsera and Siegel-Hawley 2012). This has been due to courts rolling back desegregation court orders (Clotfelter 2004, Orfield and Frankenberg 2012), White families continuing to move away from school districts with concentrated populations of students of color (Goyette, Farrie and Freely 2012, Goyette, Iceland and Weininger 2014) and an educational policy arena that has focused on student achievement instead of racial diversity. The policy conversation is now beginning to shift. In the last several years, an increasing number of policy makers both at the grassroots and national level are examining how to make American schools more racially and economically diverse (Kahlenberg 2003, Kahlenberg and Potter 2014, Potter, Quick and Davies 2016) and the federal government has recently set aside new grants for districts and schools promoting school diversity (US Department of Education (USDOE) 2016).

Giving parents a series of different educational options, or school choice, has become the consensus tool for creating such diversity. The mandated pupil assignment and forced busing policies of the 1970s were so politically unpopular as to be off the table. Residential segregation, underlying most school assignments, remains a persistent problem. But giving parents additional choices, and sometimes choices outside of their assigned school district has emerged as the most palatable and expedient policy alternative (Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley and Orfield 2008, Kahlenberg and Potter 2014, Orfield and Frankenberg 2012). Among school choice options, Montessori has consistently been a sought after public school choice (Kahn 1990) and it has expanded exponentially through first magnet and then charter schools (NCMPS 2014b). Yet there are limitations to how much schools of choice can effectively create racial and socioeconomic diversity. School choice requires parents to have the time and knowledge to research school options, navigate complicated choice systems, and in some cases, provide their own transportation. Not surprisingly, research shows that low-income families and families of color
are less likely to participate in school choice programs (Pattillo, Delale-O’Connor and Butts 2014, Pattillo 2015, Pérez 2011, Rhodes and DeLuca 2014). The result is that even programs designed to create racial diversity can end up unintentionally excluding low-income families and families of color. Nearly all public Montessori schools face the challenge of being “choice” schools in that families must choose these schools through a lottery or other special enrollment practices rather than being schools to which students are automatically assigned.

An extensive literature on public Montessori has primarily focused on examining how effectively public Montessori educators maintain high fidelity Montessori implementation (Daoust and Suzuki 2013, Daoust and Suzuki 2014, Kahn 1990, Kostin 1995, Lillard 2012, McKenzie 1994, South Carolina Public Montessori Study 2015a, South Carolina Public Montessori Study 2015b, Van Acker 2013) and examining student outcomes (Dohrmann et al. 2007, Lillard and Else-Quest 2006). Such studies rarely examine the extent of racial or socioeconomic diversity at these schools. Lillard and Else-Quest’s Science study of public Montessori in Milwaukee, the most high profile study to date, declined to collect racial and ethnic data on participants, arguing that parental socioeconomic background had more impact and out of concerns that doing so would “decrease [study] participation in this racially divided city” (2006: 1893). The absence of clear demographic data in earlier studies, while supporting data collection efforts, have made it challenging to determine the racial and economic diversity of students surveyed.

As education researchers demonstrate the continued salience of race on student educational outcomes (Ferguson 2000, Johnson Jr 2014, Lewis and Diamond 2015, Lewis 2003, Lewis-McCoy 2014), more recently, scholars have begun examining public Montessori and the academic, disciplinary and social justice context of Black and Latino students (Ansari and

Still, much remains unknown about the student enrollment of public Montessori sector as a whole and the demographic makeup of particular schools. The 1993 Montessori Public Schools Consortium (MSPC) directory (Montessori Public Schools Consortium (MPSC) 1993), the Public Montessorian 2005 directory (Shapiro 2005) and the Public Montessori census undertaken by the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector in 2014 (NCMPS 2014a) were important steps in documenting the number of schools around the country. Furman University’s study of South Carolina public Montessori programs, most of which are partial school programs, found that of the 6,352 students in public Montessori in South Carolina, 58% were White, 32% were Black, Latino students made up 6% and other students were 4%. South Carolina public Montessori White students were overrepresented by 5% in comparison to state enrollments (South Carolina Public Montessori Study 2015c). Beyond these two projects, no national study has attempted to quantify or evaluate the diversity of student enrollment in public Montessori.

**Methodology**

In order to measure student racial/ethnic and socio-economic diversity in public Montessori schools, I created and analyzed an original data set of the 300 whole school public Montessori schools out of 470 public Montessori schools open in 2012-13, derived from four data sources: the 2013 National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) data on public schools, the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector 2014 All Montessori Census, the Public
Montessorian 2005 directory and the 1993 Montessori Public Schools Consortium (MSPC) directory. This dataset does not include Head Start and publicly funded Early Childhood Centers. I also do not attempt to evaluate the fidelity of the public Montessori programs. If programs were reported to NCMPS, the Public Montessorian or MSPC as Montessori programs and/or if they had Montessori in the title in the NCES school database, they were included in the dataset. Background research of school websites indicates only a few schools use the Montessori name without some connection in their curriculum, and those handful, like the Einstein Montessori Charter schools in Florida, were not included in the database.

Through research on school websites, I also identified whether schools were charters. It was often difficult to determine whether schools were magnet schools or not, so I combined the district and magnet schools into a single category. Most non-magnet district schools are also choice schools, so have similar characteristics to a district-run magnet program in that families must opt in to enroll.

Once I had developed a list of public Montessori programs, I derived a subset of 300 whole school programs for which 2012-13 demographic data was available. I collected data on students’ racial/ethnic background and eligibility for free or reduced lunch, a proxy measure for the concentration of low-income students in a school. (In 2012-13, a family of four earning under $42,643 was eligible for reduced price lunch.) With Katie Brown, we matched each school with their surrounding school district using the National Center for Educational Statistics Common Core of Data (CCD) collected annually from schools in order to compare each public Montessori school’s similarity or dissimilarity to the district enrollment. These 300 whole school public Montessori schools make up approximately three quarters of the 470 public Montessori programs open in 2013. The remainder are Montessori programs located inside schools for which NCES
does not provide demographic data, so I was not able to include these programs in my analysis. However, with 94,613 students, these whole school public Montessori schools represent 76% of approximately 125,000 public Montessori students around the United States (NCMPS 2015).

**Findings**

**Whole School Montessori Sample in Context**

As a sample, these 300 whole school public Montessori schools were located in 36 states and the District of Columbia. The states with the largest number of whole school Montessoris were in Arizona (30 schools), California (24 schools) and Wisconsin (21 schools). Urban public Montessori schools make up 47% of the sample. There were 135 magnet/district schools (45%) and 165 were charter schools (55%). In 2012-2013, the average school size was 315 students.²

**Racial & Economic Diversity of the public Montessori sector**

In 2012-13, whole school public Montessori schools, as a group, enrolled a higher proportion of students of color than all US public schools. Students of color, including Black, Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American and multiracial students, made up 54% of all public Montessori students in comparison to 49% of all public school students. Figure 1 shows that much of the concentration of students of color came from the higher percentage of Black students (27%) compared to the national average (16%) as well as a slightly higher enrollment of multiracial students. White, Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander and Native American students are slightly underrepresented in public Montessori compared to the national average.

² Readers may view the 2012-13 whole school Montessori database here: https://goo.gl/uTQLdX
Considering students by socioeconomic background, in 2012-13, whole school public Montessori schools enrolled a lower proportion of students eligible for free and reduced-priced lunch (FRL) (40%) in comparison to the national average (51%). This meant that students at public Montessori schools were somewhat more economically advantaged than the total US public student enrollment.

**Figure 1: Students by racial/ethnic background and free and reduced lunch status at 300 whole school public Montessori schools compared to total US public schools 2012-13**


To better see the racial/ethnic diversity among the public Montessori student enrollment, Figure 2 shows that while White students formed the largest share of whole school public Montessori students (44%), Black students made up 28% of the enrollment, Latino students were 19%, Asian/Pacific Islander were 4% and Native American students were 1%. In 2012-13, the
majority of public Montessori students, 52,313 students, were students of color, a significant statistic given the perception that public Montessori disproportionately enrolls White students.

**Figure 2: Total enrollment by race/ethnicity at whole school public Montessori schools 2012-13**

Moreover, public Montessori schools had higher levels of racial/ethnic diversity in comparison to the total student enrollment in US public schools. Figure 3 shows that in 2012-13, 54% of public Montessori students attended racially diverse schools, defined as schools where there were 25-75% students of color enrolled. This was in comparison to only 39% of all US students attending racially diverse public schools.

**Figure 3: Distribution of public Montessori students and all US public school students by proportion of students of color in the school**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Montessori students</th>
<th>All US public school students</th>
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A similar number of public Montessori school students (27%), in comparison to the national average, attended schools where students of color made up a majority (75-100%). Public Montessori students were also less likely to attend schools with limited racial diversity. Nineteen percent of public Montessori students attended schools with 0-25% students of color compared to 34% of all US public school students.

How does that student diversity impact Latino and Black students in particular, who have been shown to disproportionately attend racially isolated schools (Orfield, Kucsera and Siegel-Hawley 2012)? Figure 4 shows that both Black and Latino students attending public Montessori schools were more likely to attend racially diverse schools (25-75% students of color) than their other public school peers. The fact that almost half of Latino Montessori students attend racially diverse schools compared to 34% nationally is particularly significant given trends that Latino
student segregation is nationally on the rise (Orfield, Kucsera and Siegel-Hawley 2012). Yet a significant number, over half of Black Montessori students, and 44% of Latino Montessori students still attended schools that were majority (75-100%) students of color, though in both cases, this concentration was lower than the overall figures for Black and Latino students in US public schools.

Figure 4: Distribution of Black and Latino students in public Montessori and all US public schools by proportion of student of color in the school

![Distribution of Black and Latino students](image)


Thus while public Montessori schools are more racially diverse overall than the national public school profile and serve a greater proportion of students of color, there is also evidence that some students of color are concentrated in racially isolated public Montessori schools. While these students are receiving a Montessori education, they are not receiving the benefits of a racially
diverse school. The next section examines how that difference varies between Montessori district/magnet schools and Montessori charter schools.

**Racial and Economic Diversity in District/Magnet and Charter Montessori schools**

Nationwide, in 2013, charter schools made up only six percent of the nation’s public schools (National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) 2015). In comparison, by 2015, 41% of public Montessori programs were charter schools. In the twenty-five years since charter schools were first created in Minnesota, 238 charter Montessori schools have opened, only slightly less than the 314 new district magnet schools. As Figure 5 shows, in the last five years, Montessori charter school growth has overtaken that of district/magnet schools as the public Montessori sector grows at a rapid pace.

**Figure 5: New district/magnet and charter Montessori schools 1990-2015**

![Figure 5: New district/magnet and charter Montessori schools 1990-2015](image)
While both magnet and charter schools are schools of choice that parents must voluntarily select, a critical difference between magnets and charters is that magnets were established as part of racial desegregation efforts, often in urban areas, and often must meet a target enrollment of students from particular racial and ethnic backgrounds. In contrast, charter schools can be created by any group looking for an educational alternative, and charter schools have historically been held accountable more for their academic results rather than the demographic of their enrollment. How do these different missions impact the racial and economic diversity of charter Montessori and district/magnet Montessori schools?

A significant number of Montessori charter and district/magnet schools are racially diverse (between 25-75% students of color). As figure 6 shows, slightly more than half of district/magnet schools are racially diverse (between 25-75%) and slightly less than half of charter Montessori schools are also racially diverse.

Figure 6: Proportion of students of color at whole school district/magnet and charter Montessori schools 2012-13 (N=300)
At the same time, a greater number of Montessori charter schools enroll a low proportion of students of color and low-income students in comparison to district/magnet Montessori schools. Thirty-eight percent of schoolwide charter Montessori schools (62 schools) enroll 25% or fewer students of color compared to twelve percent of district and magnet Montessori schools (16 schools). This lower level of diversity follows a pattern identified by Renzulli and Evans (2005) who demonstrated that many non-urban charters were driving White flight from traditional public schools.

Considering the level of student poverty, Figure 7 shows that almost two thirds of district/magnet Montessori schools and 40% of charter Montessori schools have high levels of socioeconomic diversity (25-75% free and reduced eligible students), a critical component for the successful learning for all students (Kahlenberg 2003).
Similar to the racial diversity distribution among district/magnet and charter Montessori schools, there were fewer economically diverse charters in 2012-13 than there were economically diverse district/magnet Montessori schools. Significantly, half of Montessori charters enrolled 25% or fewer free and reduced lunch eligible students (82 schools) compared to sixteen percent of district and magnet schools (21 schools). Twenty-three charter Montessori schools reported zero free and reduced lunch eligible students, a figure which meant their schools were underrepresented by 14% to 79% in low-income students in comparison to their surrounding district.

In examining the difference in racial and economic diversity between district/magnet and charter Montessori schools, it’s possible that this difference is primarily due to the fact that many charter Montessori schools have opened in small towns or rural areas whose small school
districts wouldn’t have otherwise been able to support a magnet Montessori program. Using our same data, Brown found that one third of Montessori charter represented the demographics of their district, while two thirds were racially disproportionate, enrolling more White students (Brown 2016). In order to further examine how both district/magnet and charter school demographics compare to student enrollments in their surrounding district, I examined how similar or different public Montessori schools were to the racial and socioeconomic demographics of their surrounding district using 2012-13 data. This is a simpler measure than the Index of Dissimilarity, a measure commonly used to examine the level of segregation in a geographic region compared to a larger geographic region (Orfield, Kucsera and Siegel-Hawley 2012).

Here are the two formulas used:

Racial/Socioeconomic difference from district:

\[ \text{Difference} = \% \text{ FRL students in school} - \% \text{ FRL students in district} \]

OR

\[ \text{Difference} = \% \text{ Students of color in school} - \% \text{ Students of color in District} \]

In order to evaluate whether public Montessori schools enroll fewer students of color than their surrounding district, Figure 8 shows the number of public Montessori district/magnet and charter schools that had fewer, equal to and more students of color than their surrounding districts. Schools with fewer students of color than the surrounding district are below the x-axis, while schools with more students of color than the district are above the x-axis.

**Figure 8: Charter and District/Magnet Montessori student enrollment difference by % students of color**
While both district/magnet and charter Montessori schools show similar patterns, 20% of charters enroll the same or more students of color than their surrounding district while 40% of magnets enroll the same or more students of color than their surrounding district. At the same time, 80% of charters (131 schools) enroll fewer students of color than their surrounding district, while 60% of district/magnet schools (80 schools) enroll fewer students of color than their surrounding district.

To understand whether there is a significant socioeconomic difference between students in public Montessori schools and their surrounding district, Figure 9 shows the number of public Montessori district/magnet and charter schools that had fewer, equal to and more free and reduced lunch eligible students than their surrounding districts.

Figure 9: Charter and District/Magnet Montessori student enrollment difference from surrounding district by % Free and Reduced Lunch students
While both district/magnet and charter Montessori schools show similar patterns, one quarter of charters enroll the same or more free and reduced lunch eligible students than the surrounding district, while 30% of district/magnet schools enroll the same or more free and reduced lunch eligible students than the surrounding district. Meanwhile, three quarters of charters (123 schools) enroll fewer free and reduced lunch eligible students than their surrounding district, while 70% of district/magnet schools (93 schools) enroll fewer free and reduced lunch eligible students than their surrounding district.

A majority of both district/magnet and charter Montessori schools enroll a student population that includes fewer students of color and low income students than the surrounding district. These lower enrollments can be positive if they help reduce the racial and economic isolation of students. But extreme dissimilarity can be problematic when it suggests that the public Montessori school enrolls a significantly more advantaged population than the
surrounding district. Such dissimilarity was grounds for blending a Montessori program at Leschi Elementary in Seattle (Nyland 2015, Stocking 2015), and has made news in Charlotte, North Carolina (Helms 2015). Such racial disproportionality can also be grounds for denying a charter application or threatening its renewal. Public Montessori charter applications in Salem, Oregon (Wong 2014) and Santa Cruz, California (Brown 2012, McCord 2012) were denied on the grounds that they would serve an elite student body. Disproportionately White enrollment jeopardized the Montessori charter renewals for California Montessori Project in Elk Grove, California (Elk Grove Citizen 2016) and Chippewa Valley, Wisconsin (Swedien 2013).

Longitudinal data of public Montessori student enrollment in the 300 schoolwide programs shows how the aggregate impact of this charter growth may lead public Montessori schools to be less racially diverse in the future. Figure 5 shows that in the last 10 years, total White student enrollment has increased consistently while Black student enrollment has remained the same.

Figure 10: Ten year change in whole school public Montessori student demographics 2002-2012

![Figure 10: Ten year change in whole school public Montessori student demographics 2002-2012](image-url)
Public Montessori is Whiter than it used to be, and this is due in part to the rise of White majority Montessori charters and the closure of some urban magnets in majority Black communities. At the same time, the number of free and reduced lunch eligible students and Latino students is growing at public Montessori schools around the country. This may be due to the growth of charter Montessori programs in the West and Southwest, particularly in the charter friendly states of Arizona, California, Colorado and Texas.

Discussion

A key strength of the public Montessori sector is its success in creating racially and economically diverse schools. Data analysis of the racial and socioeconomic demographics of whole school public Montessori programs open in 2012-13 indicate that they serve a majority of students of color, disproportionately enroll Black students in comparison to the national average, and continue to attract families from all racial/ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. Students in a public Montessori school are more likely to attend a racially diverse school than their national public school peers. More Black and Latino public Montessori students are likely to attend a racially diverse school, a stark contrast to the experience of the US cohort of public school Black and Latino students who disproportionately experience racially isolated schools. These students experience Montessori education alongside the academic and social benefits of attending racially diverse schools.

At the same time, not all public Montessori schools are racially and socioeconomically diverse. Half of Black and Latino students attend public Montessori schools with a majority of other students of color. Over a third of charter Montessori schools and 12% of district/magnet
Montessori schools enroll 25% or fewer students of color. The percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch at public Montessori school is eleven percent lower than the national average. In comparing public Montessori school demographics to their surrounding district, the majority of district/magnet and charter Montessori schools had lower and in some cases significantly lower enrollments of students of color and free and reduced lunch eligible students than their surrounding district. While in some cases, such dissimilarity can help reduce racial and socioeconomic isolation, when the differences are stark, they can be grounds for terminating a Montessori program. Thus for many public Montessori schools, enrolling a diverse population students is not only a social good, it is also a matter of institutional survival.

While this study demonstrates the high levels of racial and socioeconomic diversity in public Montessori schools and areas where such diversity is limited, additional research is needed to effectively evaluate the experience of the most educationally vulnerable students in public Montessori. One common question that public Montessori educators are repeatedly asked by policy makers, politicians and district-level administrators is whether the method “is good for” specific populations of students, for example, Blacks, Latinos, and English language learners. Though initial research has demonstrated both promising and mixed results for these student populations, as a research community, we are a long way away from adequately having an answer to these questions. Examining test score data from a large sample of public Montessori schools disaggregated by student racial and socioeconomic cohort, similar to the school district level research of Sean Reardon and colleagues at the Stanford Center for Policy Analysis (Reardon 2013, Reardon 2016) would help us better understand to what extent there are racial and economic achievement gaps at public Montessori schools, and how these gaps compare to their surrounding districts. Large scale studies of lottery winners and lottery losers applying to
enroll in a public Montessori program could help to examine the efficacy of Montessori over a number of years, particularly for low income students and students of color.

In addition, research is also needed to better understand why charter Montessori schools enroll lower number of free and reduced lunch eligible students and students of color. In some cases, this may be due to limited recruitment efforts (Jabbar 2016, Welner 2013), structural barriers to enrollment for poor families alongside an overwhelming number of White middle-class applicants (Makris and Brown 2016). Montessori educators may also raise concerns with some parents of color if they downplay academic outcomes in favor of focusing on the holistic and socio-emotional benefits of the Montessori method (Debs 2016).

Maintaining such diversity is a challenge even for Montessori charters that began with explicit missions of racial diversity. Baltimore Montessori charter and City Garden Montessori in St. Louis have found their student populations becoming increasingly White (Bowie 2016) (Prothero 2016). Both schools are now advocating measures to implement weighted charter lotteries in order to maintain a racially and economically diverse student body (Potter, Quick and Davies 2016).

As a public school choice, public Montessori has the potential to lead the school choice sector towards fulfilling its potential in creating racially and economically diverse schools. Public Montessori schools have been widely successful in bringing students from all racial and socioeconomic backgrounds together, but must continue working to ensure that these schools maintain this progress. In addition, public Montessori schools must be particularly proactive in order to recruit and sustain their community’s most vulnerable families. I close with a number of some strategies public Montessori schools are using to enroll and support a racially and economically diverse student body:
Access
• Provide full-day programming and before and after care to support working families
• Provide transportation to all families
• Participate in the district lottery process to simplify enrollment for parents
• Use a weighted lottery to increase enrollment of disadvantaged students
• Offer sliding scale tuition if the preschool program is not free.
• Follow federal law mandating that charter Montessori schools that have private
  preschools conduct open lotteries at age 5 to ensure that all students have access to the
  charter program
• Offer summer programming

Outreach
• Develop a thorough outreach plan and share it publicly with your school community
• Print brochures in multiple languages, and include translations or a translation service on
  website
• Hold information sessions at community libraries, public housing, Head Start facilities,
  places of worship
• Publicize Montessori’s efficacy with English Language Learners and Students with
  Special Needs
• Publicize Montessori’s rich curriculum around cultural diversity
• Share academic results so that parents will know they are choosing a college preparatory
  curriculum

Cultural Diversity & Student Support
• Hire diverse staff, and create school-based pathways for training and hiring from within
  the local community
• Use curriculum materials that accurately represent economically and racially diverse
  students and families
• Include a parent-outreach coordinator on staff who recruits a diverse population of
  students and supports a diverse population of families

Advocacy
• Advocate for increased public funding for all early childhood students, starting as young
  as possible
• Advocate for well-planned and intentional urban renewal plans, including mixed-income
  housing and affordable units.
• Advocate for greater support/mandates in federal, state and local policy to promote
  racially and socioeconomically diverse schools.

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