Advancing Equity through Children's Cabinets

Lessons from a School Integration Initiative

Stefan Lallinger
Fellow and Director of the Bridges Collaborative at TCF
Scholar-in-Residence at American University

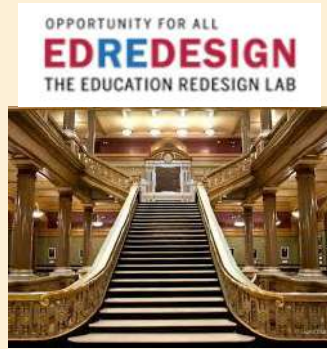***By All Means Convening, November 2020***

Who am I?

Someone who has been thinking about equity for a long time...

A former PK-8 principal

A former BAM Consultant in Providence

Director of a National School Integration Initiative

✉ **lallinger@tcf.org**   🐦 **@StefanLallinger**

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Objectives

+ Provide context on the Bridges Collaborative and school integration efforts

+ Describe lessons learned from the Collaborative as a window into contemporary equity considerations for other efforts around the country

+ Pose considerations for Children's Cabinets and collective impact organizations

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Context:
Integration & the Bridges Collaborative

Racial Segregation in American Schools

Today, ⅕ of American public schools have almost no white students, and another ⅕ of American public schools have almost no students of color.

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Integration works

After decades of research, there is a consensus in the research community that school integration by race and class works and has a myriad of benefits for students ranging from academic to social outcomes.

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- **Students in integrated schools have higher average test scores.**
  - On the 2017 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) given to fourth-graders in math, for example, low-income students attending schools that are more affluent scored roughly two years of learning ahead of low-income students in high-poverty schools (Lubienski and Lubienski 2011).

- **Students in integrated schools have better academic outcomes.**
  - They are more likely to enroll in college (Palardy 2013)
  - They are less likely to drop out (Balfanz and Legters 2004)
  - They demonstrate smaller academic gaps among students of different racial backgrounds (Mantil et al 2012).

- **Attending an integrated school can be a more effective academic intervention than receiving extra funding in a higher-poverty school.**
  - A 2010 study of students in Montgomery County, Maryland, found that students living in public housing randomly assigned to lower-poverty "green zone" neighborhoods and schools outperformed those assigned to higher-poverty "red zone" neighborhoods and schools in math and reading, even though the higher-poverty schools received $2,000 extra funding per pupil (Schwartz 2010).

What is the Bridges Collaborative?

A national initiative of 57 school districts, charter schools, and housing organizations committed to working together to further school integration in their communities.

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Bridges Collaborative Members
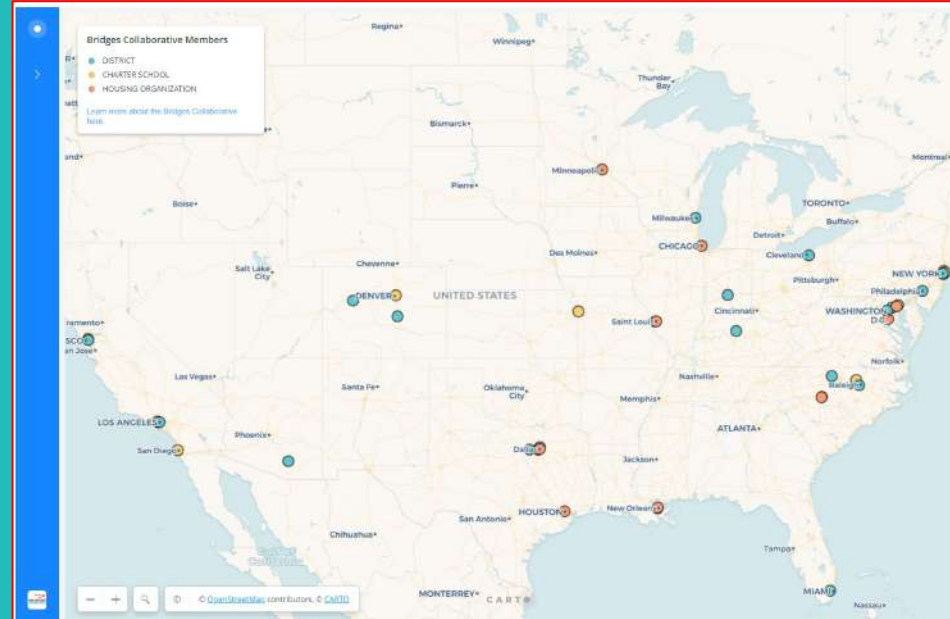
Learnings about Equity

1. There is often a gap between espoused beliefs on systemic change and actual willingness for change.

Protests calling for systemic changes around the country have existed at the same time as resistance to fundamental changes in school attendance boundaries.

Protests in Montgomery County, MD

Last month, in the parking lot of a Bethesda library, a thousand Montgomery County residents raised their hands and swore their commitment to dismantling white supremacy.

A few months earlier, just a few miles away, a smaller crowd formed in the cafeteria of Quince Orchard High School. This crowd gathered not to fight racial injustice but to uphold it: to loudly oppose the school system's nascent study of boundary lines and countywide segregation. At this public meeting, one parent took the microphone and, speaking of black, brown and poor children in their schools, complained that "you can't put that burden on us."

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2. How we define success and quality is inextricably linked to the greater struggle to overcome systemic bias.

Resistance to re-considering how we define school quality and student success stymies systemic change.

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Test scores, "merit," and school rankings

Only 7 Black Students Got Into Stuyvesant, N.Y.'s Most Selective High School, Out of 895 Spots

3. Language matters.

In racially, socioeconomically, and politically diverse communities, the language used to describe efforts for systemic change matters tremendously. Words like "diversity," "systemic racism," "integration," "white supremacy," do not mean the same thing to different people and a lack of a common understanding can prevent real progress.

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50/50 schools in Dallas, Texas

Dallas Schools, Long Segregated, Charge Forward on Diversity

First-grade students at Solar Preparatory School for Girls in Dallas. The school emphasizes the sciences and art. Allison V. Smith for The New York Times

By Dana Goldstein

June 19, 2017

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DALLAS — Michael Hinojosa was about to enter the ninth grade in Dallas when a federal judge ordered the city's public schools to integrate.

4. Who is at the table? Whose voice is heard?

Even the noblest efforts fall down when they do not attend to the fundamental question of whose voice is being heard and how the most vulnerable communities are engaged.

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Who is returning to schools in NYC

CITY

'I Don't Trust What The Department of Education Is Saying': Parents of Color Choose All-Remote Learning at Higher Rates

Closing Considerations

Questions to consider:

- **What fundamental changes are required to make progress on the issues your communities face? Are they perceived as linked to the greater public outrage against injustice?**

- **Does your definition of success perpetuate some of the root causes of systemic injustice?**

- **What language do you use to describe the social phenomena in your communities and does everyone understand it? Does it mean the same thing to all stakeholders?**

- **Who is at your table? How do you know what people care about?**

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Questions, Resources, and Follow up

Resources on Integration

+ [Toolkits](#) for Diversifying Schools & Integrating Classrooms
+ [Fact Sheet](#) and [Video](#) on the Benefits of Diversity

Resources on The Bridges Collaborative

+ Visit [tcf.org/bridges-collaborative/](#)
+ [One-Pager and FAQ](#) on the Bridges Collaborative

✉ **lallinger@tcf.org**

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