Poverty Reduction Background Paper:
Income Integration of Schools
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Efforts to reduce poverty – and, in turn, improve social and economic outcomes for all Hamiltonians - are a priority for both the Hamilton Community Foundation and the community as a whole. This paper will summarize and explain income integration within schools as one potential focus of these efforts, as well as examine key research and policy considerations that will be helpful in the discussion of this approach.

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Introduction:
This paper is presented in three parts. The first presents the idea and concept of income integration in the school system in the form of a summary of Gerald Grant's book *Hope and Despair in the American City: Why there are no bad schools in Raleigh*. The book is a tale of two cities, Syracuse New York and Raleigh North Carolina, and the divergent paths they took in developing their education systems. Grant explores the decisions, values, policies, and leadership which underpin Raleigh's success – and Syracuse's failure – at transforming their respective school systems.

The second part of this book reflects on some of the research which is the foundation for Grant's book and for the integration of schools more generally. In looking at this body of research and a limited sample of subsequent Canadian research, it is clear that while there is not an exact parallel, there are definite links to be made between Grant's observations and our own experiences in Hamilton.

And finally, the last section of this paper examines the current planning context in Hamilton, as well as the policy considerations and implications surrounding income integration as a means of reducing poverty and improving individual and collective educational and social outcomes in our community.

Part One: Summary of *Hope and Despair in the American City: Why there are no bad schools in Raleigh,* by Gerald Grant, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-674-03294-1.

In 1976 in North Carolina, two school boards – the City of Raleigh and Wake County the suburban area surrounding it – made the extraordinary decision to merge into one school district under the direction of the county. The decision was tirelessly supported by leading educators as well as business and civic leaders. The rationale for the merger was highlighted in a 1965 Vanderbilt University study which concluded that it not only made good sense and would stabilize racial integration (which over time in Raleigh has shifted to income integration) but also "would be a determining factor in the successful development of the Raleigh Wake County Community into a major . . . industrial urban complex." (Grant, 2009, p. 88)

In his book *Hope and Despair in the American City: Why there are no bad schools in Raleigh,* Gerald Grant highlights the achievements and challenges of this merger, as well as its outcomes. He explores the policies, research, planning and leadership efforts which underpin and support it. And, perhaps most interesting to those of us living in Hamilton, he compares and contrasts the Raleigh experience with that of Syracuse, NY, a mid-sized northern American city, which in many ways resembles our own community.

Simply put, the guiding principle to the Raleigh approach is that no one school within the Board is permitted to have more than 40% students from low income families. Schools are rebalanced annually through a system of program enhancements and academic specialization, as well as through a comprehensive system of transportation (bussing), that ensures schools stay within this threshold.

Bussing children to and from school is not a new concept in most US cities, though certainly how it is viewed does vary considerably. However, in Raleigh and other communities, a unique approach was employed. This included bussing poor children out of socio-economically challenged neighbourhoods and into the more affluent suburbs, as well as suburban kids into urban areas, all with the enticement of enhanced or specialized programs, also known as magnet schools, ranging from unique academic, music or athletic programming. In Grant's view, though challenging at times to implement, this was a unique, innovative, and exceptionally successful approach.

But integration of schools based on race (initially, as a result of legal decisions in the United States) and subsequently based on income, as well as the transportation / bussing requirements that sustained it, were not the only factors in the successes of the Wake County Board.

Strong leadership from successive superintendents challenged the system to be better, to understand more about the needs of each child, and to respond to those needs, one-on-one, if need be, ensuring each child was learning to his or her fullest potential. When the then-current superintendent of education for Wake County asked the school board to commit to a 95 percent pass rate on state standardized tests, people thought it was an unrealistic and audacious goal. It was. But the superintendant knew, much like his belief in integration itself, the only way to achieve excellence was to demand excellence.

The superintendent ensured this was not a toothless exercise. Nor was he intent on setting-up his teachers, principals, or students for failure. He armed teachers and principals with more autonomy then they had ever had. He set expectations of them working together on teaching approaches, with the most gifted teachers and principals sharing their knowledge with the most challenged. Additionally, he continued to support and enhance data collection methods which helped pinpoint the needs of each and every student in the county, giving teachers the direct and immediate feedback they needed to refine and reshape their approach with each student with whom they were working. And with this new approach came a new philosophy: resources were rushed to support and improve underperforming students and classrooms.

The outcomes for school and students have been noteworthy: many schools attained the 95 percent test-pass target. Between 1994 and 2003, third graders' pass figures on math and reading tests rose from 71 percent to 91 percent. For poor children, the math figures went from 55 percent to 80 percent pass during the first five-year period. As Grant points out, not only was the board now attracting good teachers, these teachers were overwhelmingly willing to educate their own kids in the school district, an overwhelming testament to the quality of what was being delivered.

In Syracuse, no such leadership existed. School boards did not merge. Conventional attempts to cure inner-city ills failed to bring back the middle class. Teachers left, schools crumbled and social conditions in the neighbourhood continue to deteriorate. Poor inner-city children were left further isolated from the affluent suburbs with its higher expectations of students, schools and teachers. Inner-city schools were left struggling to meet the profound needs of its distressed communities.

Highlights from the book *Hope and Despair in the American City: Why there are no bad schools in Raleigh* by Gerald Grant:

- "Any school in Wake County where more than 40 percent of pupils were poor enough to qualify for subsidized lunches was defined as being out of balance. The policy guaranteed that all schools in Wake County would have a core of middle-class students who would establish a floor of positive expectations and create students networks across class lines that would benefit poor students" (p. 105)

- "Raleigh had transformed an entire urban system in ways that dramatically raised the achievement of poor and minority students in all its schools" (p. 91)

- "Gaps in educational achievement became not only intolerable but unthinkable. Educators didn't just talk equal education opportunity. They delivered it to all children in the system, day after day. And they reduced the gap between rich and poor, black and white, more than any other large urban educational system in America" (p 92)

- While the merger of the inner-city Raleigh board with the suburban Wake County board itself was an accomplishment, the integration of schools through bussing and, subsequently "the transformation of the schools which followed was even more remarkable" (p. 97)

- "…27 schools (were) turned into magnet schools in one year – schools with distinctive programs that any parent in the city could choose. That meant transforming the curricula in more than a third of schools in the Wake County" (p. 97)

- Single-minded and unflinchingly committed administrators "…relentlessly reached out…in schools, churches, and 'living room dialogues' all over Wake County" (p. 98)

- “Once a school opened, (the lead administrator) became legendary for quickly responding to any needs teachers had”. Conversely “programs that failed to draw students were closed down. Programs that thrived and produced results were adapted to other schools” (p. 99)

- Giving parents a wide range of choices did not mean they always got their first pick, but it enabled Wake County to create “…a workable balance…in all its schools” (p. 99)

- Set high goals: “Wake County system announced that its goal was to have 95 percent of all K – 8 students pass state exams in reading and math within five years” (pg. 93)

- “Providing teachers with resource and giving them the freedom to create programs they were proud of while holding them accountable for results” (p. 108)

- “Most (teachers) were making significant changes in how they taught in order to reach new goals” (p. 118)

- “Creation of a class of master principals and appointed them to head the new magnet schools” (p. 98) meaning that these highly skilled and successful principals could not be complacent or stay in one school. They were valued, appreciated and encouraged to take on new challenges to ensure the system continued to grow successfully

- The Board developed and relied on a comprehensive data collection system and undertook on-going and regular analysis for not only Board-wide planning e.g. allocation of resources, program decision-making (p. 103) but also for assessing the individual needs of students e.g. “diagnostics” (p. 108). In both cases the data is used to support more timely interventions and to speed up change

Part 2: Review of Body of Evidence – Past, Present and Emerging

Introduction:

Hope and Despair in the American City: Why there are no bad schools in Raleigh, by Gerald Grant cites strong evidence with regards to the integration of schools based on income. However, further analysis of this research is prudent. Recent Canadian research is also presented for consideration. While this review is neither exhaustive nor definitive, an impressive review of recent quantitative research by Charles Ungerleider and the Canadian Council on Learning provides an excellent starting point in terms of Canadian research on poverty impacts, which in turn both supports and challenges the exploration of income integration in Hamilton schools. Further scans are sure to discover additions to this body of work, not only from previous studies but also from work that is underway, current or emerging. Therefore, this section is best viewed as a starting point, one to which new information and resources will be added.

Hope and Despair Research:

Much of the research that underpins the Raleigh experience, as well as other efforts to integrate schools, strongly suggests that limited information networks and poor social skills, particularly skills that are transferable across class lines, are significant barriers to upward mobility (Wilson, as cited in Eaton 1997). In essence, this means that children in neighbourhoods and communities struggling with the impacts of concentrated poverty, such as a lack of personal security and safety, increased anti-social behaviour such as drug use, property crime, etc, are less likely to develop the networks, skills and abilities they need to improve their social condition.

Grant presents findings from a range of academics, policy-makers and educators. While there are dozen studies which support and reinforce Grant's central thesis, three seminal researchers are highlighted here: James Coleman, Equality of Educational Opportunity (1966); William Julius Wilson, The Declining Significance of Race (1980) and The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, Underclass and Public Policy (1993); and Russell Rumberger and Gregory Palardy, Does Segregation Still Matter: The Impact of Student Composition of Academic Achievement in High School (2005).

Some of the highlights from these studies include:

- Coleman (as cited in Grant, 2009. p. 159) showed that traditional measures of school quality such as facilities, curriculum, educational supplies / resources / materials, as well as teacher pay, were not as unequal across majority black and majority white schools as had been assumed, and therefore, "did not sufficiently explain the significant achievement differences between the two groups" (Fritzberg, 2000).

- Wilson did much to help shift thinking and focus on racial integration to income integration concluding that "class or income trumps race as a determinant of academic achievement" through his work that compared black and white children from similar income and parental education backgrounds (Wilson, 1980 and 1993 as cited in Grant, 2009. p. 166).

- Rumberger and Palardy undertook a study of 913 high schools in 2005 and their findings confirmed the benefit of socioeconomically balanced schools, nothing that "schools serving mostly lower income students tend to be organized and operated differently than those serving more affluent students…" along four key characteristics: teacher expectations; amounts of homework; rigour of courses offered; and feelings of safety. Poor students in balanced schools learned on average two times as much as those in high-poverty schools (Rumberger and Palardy 2005 as cited in Grant, 2009. p. 166).

How profound is the impact of poverty on children's learning? According to a report by the Public Policy Institute of California, the average reading level of tenth graders in high-poverty schools is about the same as that of a fifth grader in the most affluent schools (Rose et al 2003, as cited in Grant, 2009. p. 141).

Canadian Research:
Charles Ungerleider's The Social Consequences of Economic Inequality for Canadian Children: A Review of the Canadian Literature was undertaken with the purpose "to summarize, analyze and evaluate the Canadian quantitative literature examining the social consequences of economic inequality for children." His review included 34 studies and he presents findings in four outcome groupings: education, health, social justice and employment, with educational outcomes subdivided into academic and social / behavioural outcomes and health outcomes subdivided into emotional and physical health outcomes (Ungerleider, 2006).

Ungerleider found, in terms of educational outcomes, "…little doubt that higher income or socio-economic status is associated with better academic outcomes…" His review also highlighted:

- Child poverty accounts for 21% of the risk of poor school performance (Lipman, Offord and Boyle, 1996)
- All persistently poor children are at greater risk of failure by grade six, with welfare-dependent families more at risk than those from working poor families (De Civita *et al.* 2004)

Interestingly, especially when thinking about the potential for the integration of schools based on income in Hamilton, Ungerleider's review also looked at studies of the effects of living and attending school in poor or rich neighbourhoods, as opposed to being from a poor or rich family. One of the more salient findings was that:

- Children from poor households in poor neighbourhoods score lower than children from poor households in affluent neighbourhoods (Kohen, Brooks-Gunn, Leventhal and Hertzman 2002)

In this study Kohen, Brooks-Gunn, Leventhal and Hertzman (2002) examine the effects of neighbourhood socio-economic characteristics on the verbal and behavioural competencies of a national sample of pre-schoolers, ages four and five. Their analyses show children in high poverty neighbourhoods have lower verbal scores and higher scores for behaviour disorders than their peers in more affluent neighbourhoods.

Additionally, their work highlights the interaction between household income and neighbourhood income. Children from poor households (<$20,000) in high poverty neighbourhoods score lower verbally than children from poor households in more affluent neighbourhoods. Children from high income households in all neighbourhoods score higher than their lower income peers with the most affluent neighbourhoods also showing fewer behaviour problems. The study also indicates that while living in an affluent neighbourhood appears to benefit poor children; living amongst poorer peers does not appear to harm affluent children. Overall, this study indicates levels of neighbourhood poverty and affluence do affect children's outcomes and suggests policies should promote healthy development in these areas.

Ungerleider's review also found the following impacts in terms of education outcomes:

- Mean income of an elementary school accounts for 39 - 45% of the difference in test scores between schools, a figure that dwarfs the 3 - 6% difference teaching styles appear to make (Pyryt and Lytton, 1998)
- Higher school mean SES increases test scores between 65%; and 10% over and above family SES (Ma and Klinger, 2000)

Ungerleider's review also included the following related health outcomes:

- Low-income youth smoke more frequently, do less physical activity, spend more days sick, assess their health more negatively and have less access to doctors than high-income youth (Abernathy *e al.*, 2002) and are more frequently and severely obese than non-poor children (Phipps, Burton, Osberg, and Lethbridge, 2006)
- Low-income children were nearly 2 times more likely to be hospitalized in the previous year than adequate-income children (Guttmann, Dick and To, 2004)
- The teen birth rate is nearly four times the rate in the lowest income neighbourhood as the highest (Hardwyck and Patychuk, 1999)
- Canada's least educated give birth in adolescence far more (42%) often than the most educated (<10%) (Singh, Darroch and Frost, 2001)

Again, while the body of evidence presented is not exhaustive, it does tell a sobering tale for those children and families living in our poorest neighbourhoods. And while a range of policy options has been and will continue to be employed in attempts to ameliorate and eliminate these conditions, an argument can be made that education provides one of the best opportunities for individual upward mobility and improvements in collective social and health outcomes.

With Hamilton's highest drop-out rates seemingly reflecting the neighbourhoods with the highest concentration of poverty, there is further reason for paying attention to the findings of this book and research. At present, in Hamilton's highest drop-out rate neighbourhood, 267 of 1000 students will drop-out! In our lowest neighbourhood, which by most measures would be considered our most affluent, the rate is 6 in 1000 students.

As Grant explores in *Hope and Despair,* a strong public education system enhanced by a policy of income integration has shown to deliver significant positive outcomes at the individual child, family, neighbourhood and institutional levels.

Part 3: Policy and Planning Implication in Hamilton

In developing this paper Grant's thesis was shared, informally and unscientifically, with a few Hamiltonians. Overwhelmingly, their initial response to the concept of income integration within Hamilton's schools was, in essence, "It's an interesting idea. But Hamilton isn't the United States. We couldn't do that in here." When pressed for further explanation, reasons ranged from "We don't have the same type of poverty" and "We don't have the same racial segregation in our neighbourhoods" to "Our schools aren't that bad" and "We don't have a history of bussing children here".

To some degree these observations are accurate, particularly when we compare our neighbourhoods, schools, and school transportation networks in Hamilton to most American cities. However, it is also true that most would agree when it comes to poverty and its impact on the lives of children and families in our community, favourable comparisons to other cities or countries offer little comfort.

The reality is that Hamilton has concerning concentrations of poverty in too many of its neighbourhoods. Some of the schools in this city, particularly in the inner-city, are significantly underperforming due to a myriad of social challenges children and parents are facing in their homes and communities. And, while bussing does not occur in Hamilton to the degree it does in many US cities, there are 1000's of children on buses every day in Hamilton whose parents have chosen to send them to one of the many French immersion, magnet, or private schools that exist across our community.

School Performance:
In its Report Card on Ontario's Elementary Schools (March 2010), the Fraser Institute rates schools relative to one another to "…assist parents when they choose a school and encourage educators and parents seeking to improve Ontario schools…" (http://compareschoolrankings.org) While the ranking of individual schools has its proponents and decorators, the Fraser Institute's web-based report card and database is useful in any examination of where the educational challenges lie in Hamilton.

A review of the mapping feature on this website provides a quick visual representation of the physical location of each of the reviewed schools. (Please note that at the time it was accessed, not all schools in Hamilton were included in the Report.) What is most striking about the mapping of ranked schools in Hamilton is that schools with the lowest scores in terms of academic performance are found in the poorest neighbourhoods in our city. On the map, these lowest ranking schools are represented by "red flags", almost all of which are concentrated in the central lower city.

Changes in School System:
In the coming months and years, profound changes are coming to the education system in Hamilton. For some of the youngest children in the system, full-day early learning (FDEL) will be commencing in September 2010. Though there are many questions of implementation that have yet to be answered, ultimately, it is the Province's goal to ensure "…that all four- and five-year-olds have access to an engaging and enriching full-day of learning…" by mandating "…that all school boards offer full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds, including the integrated extended-day programs."

The full scale implementation of FDEL by 2015 in all schools in all Boards across the province will bring many changes to the elementary school system, especially in Hamilton. Uptake of FDEL will have a considerable impact on the physical space required in schools; in some areas significant accommodation and capital investment will be needed and, where this is not possible, relationships with community child care providers will be necessary to ensure that extended-day child care is available in or near all schools. Escorting or transporting children between schools and child care centres may be explored to ensure a seamless day of learning for children and their parents.

In addition to FDEL, the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board has recently announced that is has initiated three Secondary School Pupil Accommodation Review Committees to look at secondary education across HWDSB. The committees will recommend to trustees how best to use available resources in order to meet the educational needs of students by reducing excess secondary space in its schools. The three committees are structured on the basis of location, space and program placement.

It is anticipated that these accommodation reviews will lead to the restructuring of the secondary school system in Hamilton. Within the current funding model, under which school boards are predominantly funded on a per-student basis, boards that are under-capacity are challenged meet the square footage costs of their schools. Thus the goal of the review committees is "…to reduce excess secondary space within schools as well as create innovative environments that support student achievement."

Taken together, FDEL and the secondary school accommodation reviews represent significant impending changes for the education system in Hamilton. Viewed in the context of reducing poverty and improving social and educational outcomes for children, these changes represent a moment in time where there is significant opportunity to profoundly rethink, redesign and implement fundamental changes to the education system.

Supportive Leadership and Structures:
The potential to support innovation in Hamilton is profound. There is new and engaged leadership in key positions in Hamilton, including both Boards of Education, the United Way, the Hamilton Community Foundation, Mohawk College, McMaster University and the City of Hamilton. Community and institutional commitment to initiatives such as the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, the Jobs Prosperity Collaborative, the Hamilton Best Start Network and others has never been stronger.

These institutions, organizations and initiatives, individually and collectively, have made significant and important positives changes in Hamilton. These include: neighbourhood-focused projects that have shown a range of positive individual and community outcomes, connecting people to supports and to each other; the development of hubs in schools, community centres, and other places where people naturally congregate,

again, which have connected children and families to the high quality early learning and care resources that they need in a timely way; new marketing approaches for Hamilton have emerged and are beginning to help reshape how Hamilton sees itself and how others see Hamilton; and, finally, a single-minded and shared commitment is taking hold, one which strives to make Hamilton the best place to raise a child, promote innovation, engage citizens and provide diverse economic opportunities.

The City of Hamilton is a key partner in all of these initiatives and, through a refocused effort to understand the unique needs of the neighbourhoods that make up Hamilton, the City and its partners are better positioned to respond to these needs. This emerging neighbourhood focus allows Hamiltonians to have a say on the decisions that most immediately impact their lives, their neighbourhoods and their community.

The provincial government is also dedicated to 'breaking the cycle' of poverty and has developed and begun implementing its own Poverty Reduction Strategy. Key tenets of the Strategy include: setting targets and measures which aim to reduce the number of children living in poverty by 25 per cent or 90,000 kids over the next 5 years; increasing the Ontario Child Benefit (OCB), which, when fully implemented, will represent a total investment of $1.3 billion per year; and improving education and early learning through a strong and publically funded education system which the province refers to as the "the best poverty reduction strategy".

Conclusion:

Efforts to reduce poverty – and, in turn, improve social and economic outcomes for all Hamiltonians – are a priority for both the Hamilton Community Foundation and the community as a whole. And there is renewed leadership and reinvigorated resolve in Hamilton that makes this a unique time in our community's poverty reduction efforts. Impending changes within the public school board and a strong commitment from both the local and provincial levels of government mean that bold and innovative options, even challenging ones, with sound research and proven outcomes underpinning them, must be thoughtfully and thoroughly examined. The potential of income integration within Hamilton's schools to be the catalyst in Hamilton's long-term poverty reduction efforts is significant and requires full and further consideration and discussion.