

Date: 26 September 2014

To: Galveston City Council

Re: Poverty and Schools

Who is Responsible?:

Some people believe that GISD schools are really much better than their reputation, but the objective scoring system used by GreatSchools.com, for every school in the country, still rates the District as a whole as 4 out of 10. Austin and Oppe score 9 out of 10, but every other school is rated 4 or lower.

Galveston Independent School District

Know your school choice options in Texas.

Some districts allow students to transfer to schools either in or outside their district. Children can also attend charter schools. Low-income students are eligible for scholarship funding to attend private schools.

Under the federal No Child Left Behind law, students attending a Title I school designated as "in need of improvement" have the right to attend a higher performing school in the district.

[Know the system: Key terms](#)

Notice an inaccuracy? [Let us know!](#)

<p>GreatSchools District Rating</p> 	<p>P O Box 660 Galveston, TX 77553 Galveston Map > PH: (409) 766-5121 FAX: (409) 762-8391 District Web site ></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Grades n/a▶ 6,813 students▶ 16 schools <p>View all schools in this district ></p>
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This district's rating is based on its schools' test results; 10 is best.
[Learn more >](#)
[This district's stats >](#)

<http://www.greatschools.org/texas/galveston/Galveston-Independent-School-District/>

Who is responsible for the poor performance of most Galveston schools? It's easy to point a finger at the school board, the administrators and the teachers, and to conclude that it is their fault, but a closer look finds that the real problem is the same one that undermines almost everything else in this city; concentrated poverty! **The school board, the administrators and**

the teachers are not the ones who are responsible for the poverty level in the City climbing above 20%!

Much of the evolution that moved Galveston from a prosperous middle-class city, in 1960, to a declining high-poverty city, in 2014, was due to suburbanization after WWII. However, over the last 54 years, Galveston's Mayors and Councilmembers did not recognize what was happening to the City, and did not take the proper measures to stop it. Indeed, **they often adopted policies that made things far worse!**

Mayors appointed GHA Boards that continued to maintain large concentrations of poverty, in the City, in their "housing projects" and through the misuse of vouchers that allowed a large portion of them to be used in the City's poorest neighborhoods.

In fact, Galveston's Mayors and Councilmembers have done such a "good job" at helping to concentrate poverty, in the City, that they couldn't have done a better job if they had a deliberate plan to do so. The scariest thing is that, at this late, desperate hour, in the City's history; **they still have no recognition of the fundamental problem, or of the role that they played in making it worse; much less how to fix it.**

The City's current Mayor, and four former Mayors, as well as two current Councilmembers showed up to "celebrate" the return of Cedar Terrace, and still more concentrated poverty! The condition that has locked the City into a 54-year decline. **Have they already forgotten the effect Cedar Terrace had on the crime rate and the schools before Hurricane Ike?**

Galveston's schools are in trouble, because the City is drowning in child poverty. A mind-boggling 38.8% of the City's residents, under the age of 18, are living below the poverty level. A staggering 75% of the students in GISD are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches which means that only 25% of GISD's students are categorized as middle-class. (See Appendix on Poverty versus Free and Reduced-Price Lunches)

Group	% Poverty 2012 ACS (See DP03)
All people	24.7%
Under 18 years	38.8%
18 years and over	21.0%
18 to 64 years	23.3%
65 years and over	10.8%

What do you expect GISD to do when the City "creates" a student population that has 75% of the students eligible for free or reduced-price lunches?

Impoverished Schools and the Middle Class:

Many people believe that middle class students do just fine in high-poverty schools like GISD.

*"...school quality and the economic status of its student body have been shown to have significant connections to student performance. **Higher poverty schools have been proven to negatively impact student performance, regardless of the individual student's economic status.** Also, teachers in higher poverty schools must spend more time to address the additional needs of high poverty students and as a result have less time to focus on teaching course work."*

http://www.kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/reports/2005/09_2005_ThompsonvHUDRemedialReport.pdf (See Page 32)

"...low-income students attending middle-class schools perform higher, on average, than middle-class children attending high-poverty schools."

" Strikingly, low-income students in middle-class schools score better than middle-class students in the highest-poverty schools."

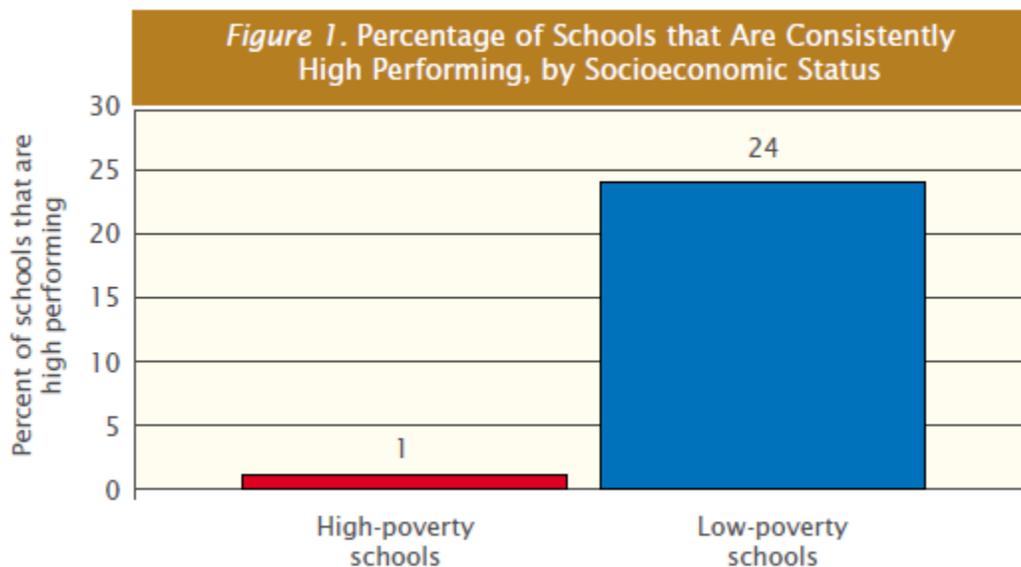
"The Overlooked Flaw at the Center of the No Child Left Behind Act" (NCLB):

"But NCLB's biggest flaw has less to do with what it attempts to do—hold schools accountable—than *what it does not attempt to do: address concentrations of poverty in our public schools.* As it turns out, *a school's effectiveness has a lot to do with the share of its student population that lives in low-income households.*"

Sounds familiar. The overlooked flaw in the NCLB is the same as the overlooked flaw in City policy!

"What NCLB Neglects":

"But NCLB does not address the central obstacle in the struggle to reduce the achievement gaps: *the concentrations of poverty in American schools.* High-poverty schools (schools in which at least 50 percent of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch) are much less likely to be successful than middle-class (low-poverty) schools. As Figure 1 shows, a middle-class school is twenty four times as likely to be consistently high performing as a high-poverty school."



Middle-Class School Environment:

"...because research finds that *what all students need most is the good learning environment found in majority middle-class schools.*

Specifically:"

"Middle-class schools have an adequate financial base (as measured against student needs) to provide small class size, modern equipment, and the like."

"Middle-class schools are more likely to spend money on the classroom than on bureaucracy."

*"Middle-class schools **provide an orderly environment.**"*

"Middle-class schools have a more stable student population, which makes it more likely that learning will occur."

"Middle-class schools have strong principals and well-qualified teachers trained in the subjects they are teaching."

"Middle-class schools have a better curricula and higher expectations."

*"Middle-class schools have **active parental involvement.**"*

"Motivated peers who value achievement can encourage excellence among classmates."

NCLB and Poverty:

*"NCLB does seek to address some of these inequalities between middle-class and high-poverty schools, but it does so in a piecemeal fashion that **accepts poverty concentrations as unalterable.**"*

"Although NCLB fails to address the core problem of economic segregation..."

*"Addressing **school concentrations of poverty**, however, is a politically difficult step."*

Note: all quotations shown above are from ["Can Separate be Equal? The Overlooked Flaw at the Center of No Child Left Behind"](#) ;except the one attributed to Kirwan.

Conclusion:

The problem with the City's schools is the same problem with the City's crime rate; high concentrations of poverty!

What is your plan to reduce it?

Appendix: Poverty versus Free and Reduced-Price Lunches

Why does the City have 38.8% of its under-18-years-of-age population living in poverty, but GISD reports that 75% of its students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches?

The simple answer is that a student qualifies for a free lunch if his/her family earns 130%, or less, of the poverty level and he/she qualifies for a reduced price lunch if his/her family earns 185%, or less, of the poverty level. **Therefore, far more students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches than those who qualify as impoverished.**

INCOME ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES
[Effective from July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015]

Household size	Federal poverty guidelines	Reduced price meals—185%					Free meals—130%				
		Annual	Monthly	Twice per month	Every two weeks	Weekly	Annual	Monthly	Twice per month	Every two weeks	Weekly
	Annual										
48 CONTIGUOUS STATES, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, GUAM, AND TERRITORIES											
1	11,670	21,590	1,800	900	831	416	15,171	1,265	633	584	292
2	15,730	29,101	2,426	1,213	1,120	560	20,449	1,705	853	787	394
3	19,790	36,612	3,051	1,526	1,409	705	25,727	2,144	1,072	990	495
4	23,850	44,123	3,677	1,839	1,698	849	31,005	2,584	1,292	1,193	597
5	27,910	51,634	4,303	2,152	1,986	993	36,283	3,024	1,512	1,396	698
6	31,970	59,145	4,929	2,465	2,275	1,138	41,561	3,464	1,732	1,599	800
7	36,030	66,656	5,555	2,778	2,564	1,282	46,839	3,904	1,952	1,802	901
8	40,090	74,167	6,181	3,091	2,853	1,427	52,117	4,344	2,172	2,005	1,003
For each add'l family member, add	4,060	7,511	626	313	289	145	5,278	440	220	203	102

For example, a family of four that earns \$23,850, or less, is living below the poverty level. However, a family of four can earn \$31,005 (\$23,850 x 1.3), or less, and still qualify for free lunches. And, a family of four can earn \$44,123 (\$23,850 x 1.85), or less, and still qualify for reduced-price lunches.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2014-04788.pdf>

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/income-eligibility-guidelines>

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