



Newark Public Schools Title VI Complaint Summary

Following a national pattern of destructive education reform policies and practices, Newark Public Schools (“NPS”) has initiated similar reforms resulting in school closure¹ in the South Ward of Newark, NJ, a predominately low-income African-American neighborhood. The brunt of these reforms occurred when NPS launched the “One Newark Plan,” a poorly designed and chaotic plan that was met with great resistance. Such reforms have been made possible by the disenfranchisement of the Newark community and reckless philanthropy.

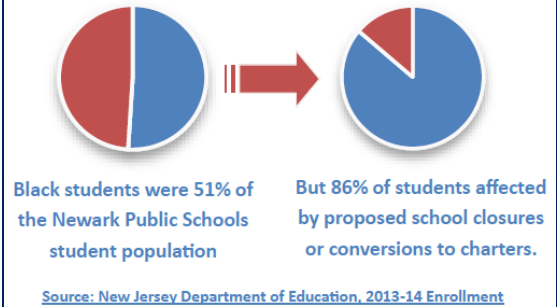
In 1995, the New Jersey Department of Education took control of NPS, thus depriving the community of Newark of the power to influence education policies in Newark. NPS was the third majority African-American district taken over by the state, following Jersey City in 1989 and Paterson in 1991. Newark residents were promised that the state takeover would result in a higher-quality education for students, yet nearly twenty years later, the state-appointed Superintendent initiated a plan to close “failing” schools. The community in Newark resisted the plan, reasoning that after twenty years of state-control, the state’s education policies could not be trusted. Indeed, the state implicitly acknowledged their own ineffectiveness by beginning to pass responsibility of educating the children of Newark to private charter operators.

One of the gravest issues affecting the Newark was the long-standing lack of facilities repairs, a problem that would cost \$1.3 billion to address. The Newark Superintendent indicated that such repairs were financially difficult, while in turn acknowledging that NPS would hand over \$1.3 billion to charter school operators from the 2012-13 to 2016-17 school year.

While charter schools were expanding, historic NPS schools were closing, primarily in African-American neighborhoods. From the 2011-12 to

¹ “Closed” schools include schools that have been permanently closed, resited, phased-out, or converted to charter schools. A resiting occurs when a neighborhood school facility is closed and students are required to attend a different facility with the same or similar name.

2014-15 “One Newark Plan”



the 2013-14 school years, ten neighborhood schools were either closed. Towards the end of the 2013-14 school year, the state-appointed Superintendent announced further school closings through the “One Newark Plan.”

The plan called for five conversions to charter schools, three conversions to Early Childhood Centers, three resitings, one phase-out, and one permanent closure. The changes once again disproportionately impacted African-American students. The plan was created without true community involvement and forced students to take buses early in the dark morning to get to school on time. The plan resulted in mass walkouts and sit-ins, and led to the filing of a civil rights complaint by Parents Unified for Local School Education—New Jersey (PULSENJ)—a parent-led grassroots organization that trains and mobilizes parents to advocate for high-quality public education.

The Title VI complaint, which was opened by the Office for Civil Rights of the Department of Education (OCR) and is currently under investigation, alleges that the “One Newark Plan” and the ensuing school closures disproportionately impacted African-American students. Knowing that findings from administrative complaints often come too late, PULSENJ organized a boycott and continued to put pressure on the district, leading to the resignation of the Superintendent. However, the community has expressed dissatisfaction with the mere resignation of one public official. The community desires the power to implement their own vision of a high-quality education.