**ARE BOSTON SCHOOL CLOSINGS DISCRIMINATORY?**

**INTRODUCTION**

Boston Public Schools desegregated in 1974 amid violence and scandal that forced minority youths to commute by bus across the city to integrate schools. Today, many urban schools in the district are being closed due to budget shortfalls. Boston Public Schools have 39,000 empty seats according to a recent study that advocated for school reorganization. However, significant protest has followed the closure announcements, and in 2011 the Black Educators Alliance filed a lawsuit against the district alleging that the 2010 school closures were racially discriminatory. This project seeks to visualize where are Boston Public School closures since 2002 racially and/or economically discriminatory? Where are schools closing in Boston? What is the racial makeup of the neighborhoods that have a high number of school closures during the period of 2002-2015? Does proximity to a closed school associate with racial location?

**METHODS**

The bulk of the project consisted of compiling data from multiple sources into a spreadsheet. The result was a complete list of schools that had been closed, renamed, merged, or reorganized between 2002 and 2015. The list was geocoded along with the racial and economic data of the student body the year before it closed. Then, I joined this information with the census block group data, and calculated the distance from census block group polygons to the closed schools. Then I was able to symbolize different phenomena: such as distance from closed schools, racial makeup and percentage of students on free lunch program prior to closure, as well as MCAS scores compared with the state averages in English and math. I also ran a regression to determine if racial makeup of a census block group significantly affected the distance they lived from a closed school.

**RESULTS**

My analysis shows that schools that closed, merged, or were reorganized between 2002 and 2015 overwhelmingly served people of color, specifically Black and Latino/a youth. The schools closed also reflected a student body that in majority were eligible for the Free Lunch Program. The multivariate OLS regression also showed that populations of nearby neighborhoods were statistically more likely to be Latino/a and/or Black. As the percentage of Black and Latino/a residents of census block groups increases, the distance to a public school that has closed decreases. Future work on the database project I began will allow for spatial-temporal analysis of racial, economic and MCAS data. In the future, further data should be sourced from Boston Public Schools to geocode changes in student populations.

**SOURCES**

- MassGIS – Census 2010 Block Group Data
- MassGIS – Boston Neighborhoods
- MassGIS – Boston Schools 2015
- City of Boston – Closed School Tables
- CityWide Parent Council – Closed Schools
- Mass DOE – MCAS Results
- Public School Reviews – School Data
- School Bag – School Data

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Projections
- StatePlane_Massachusetts_Mainland
- Datum: NAD 1983