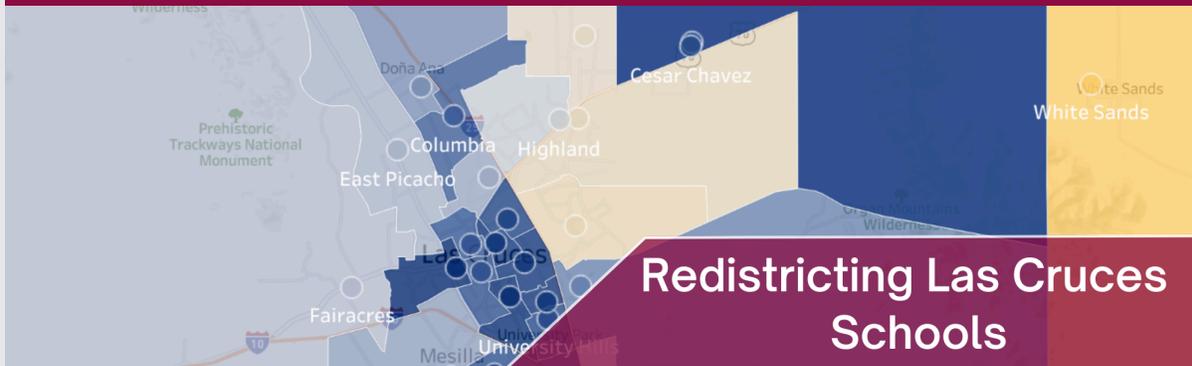




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Redistricting Las Cruces Schools

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Rezoning of the Las Cruces Public School District

Focusing on neighborhood integration when drawing new school boundaries

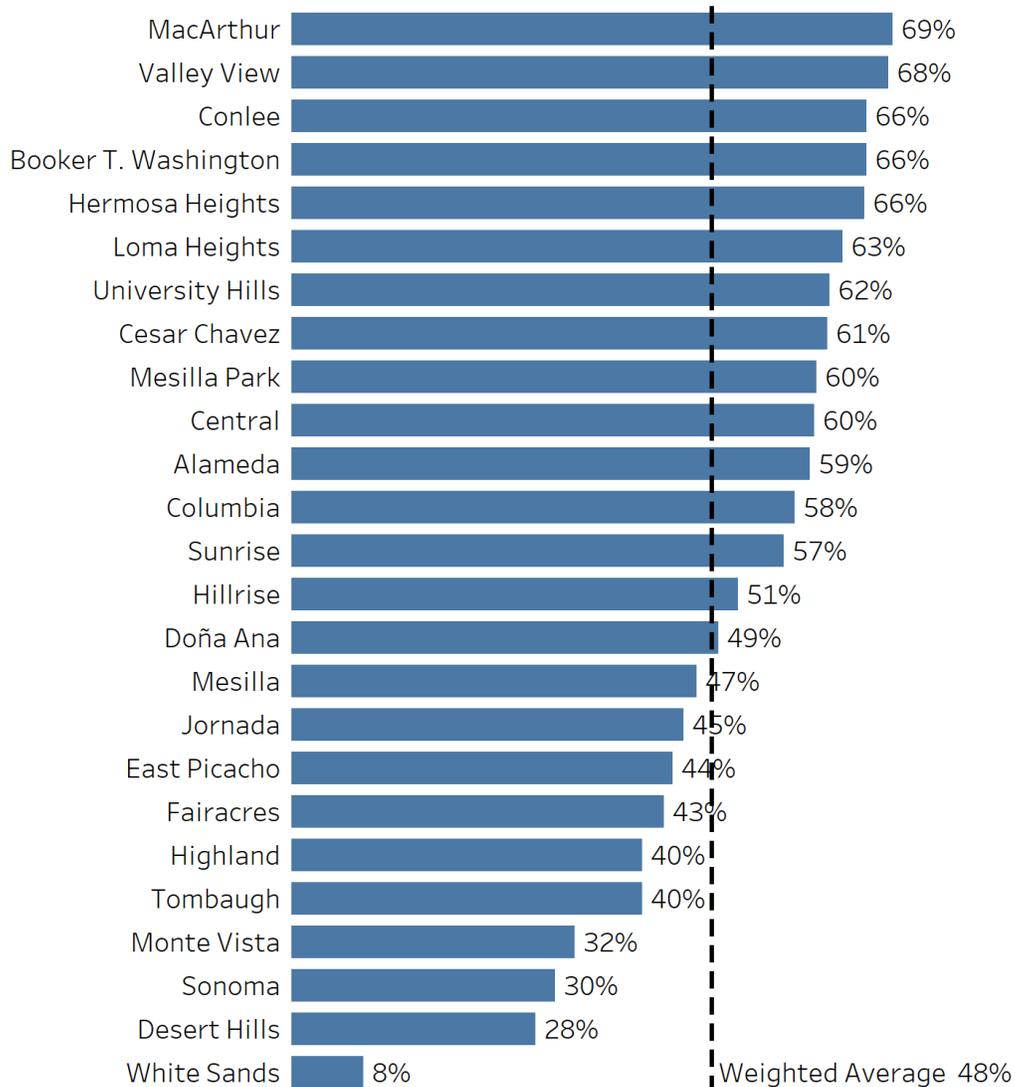
Las Cruces Public Schools (LCPS) is launching an important initiative to rezone school boundaries in response to changing population trends within the district. This redistricting effort aims to alleviate overcrowding in East Mesa schools and enhance enrollment at Mayfield High School. Additionally, the opening of the new Columbia Elementary School underscores the need for a thorough reassessment of current boundaries. (1) However, redrawing boundaries is not just about managing school capacities; it presents a valuable opportunity to foster more inclusive and equitable educational environments. As highlighted in our [previous newsletter](#), school boundaries can contribute to racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic status segregation and impact academic outcomes.

Examining Demographic Disparities in Schools

School segregation is often evaluated by examining how closely a school's demographic composition mirrors the district's composition. Our [new dashboard](#) uncovers a notable imbalance in the distribution of economically disadvantaged students across schools in Las Cruces. For instance, elementary schools such as MacArthur, Valley View, Conlee, Booker T. Washington, Hermosa Heights all report over 65% of their students as economically disadvantaged. In contrast, schools like White Sands, Desert Hills, and Sonoma report significantly lower rates of economically disadvantaged (ED) students,

at 8%, 28%, and 30%, respectively. The concentration of poverty in certain schools may reflect broader neighborhood segregation. (2)

Percentage of LCPS Elementary School Students Experiencing Economic Disadvantage, 2023



Source: New Mexico Public Education Department, 2023.

Boundaries are often drawn based on school proximity, which can unintentionally segregate students by the socioeconomic conditions and challenges present in their neighborhoods. For example, drawing a boundary around neighborhoods with high rates of poverty means that the local school is likely to serve students exposed to a range of adverse experiences.

As highlighted in our previous [Storymap](#), high-poverty neighborhoods frequently face elevated rates of eviction, child abuse, crime, and drug overdose deaths, further deepening the divide. School segregation today is influenced by several factors, including the rise of charter and private schools, income and housing inequality, and how district

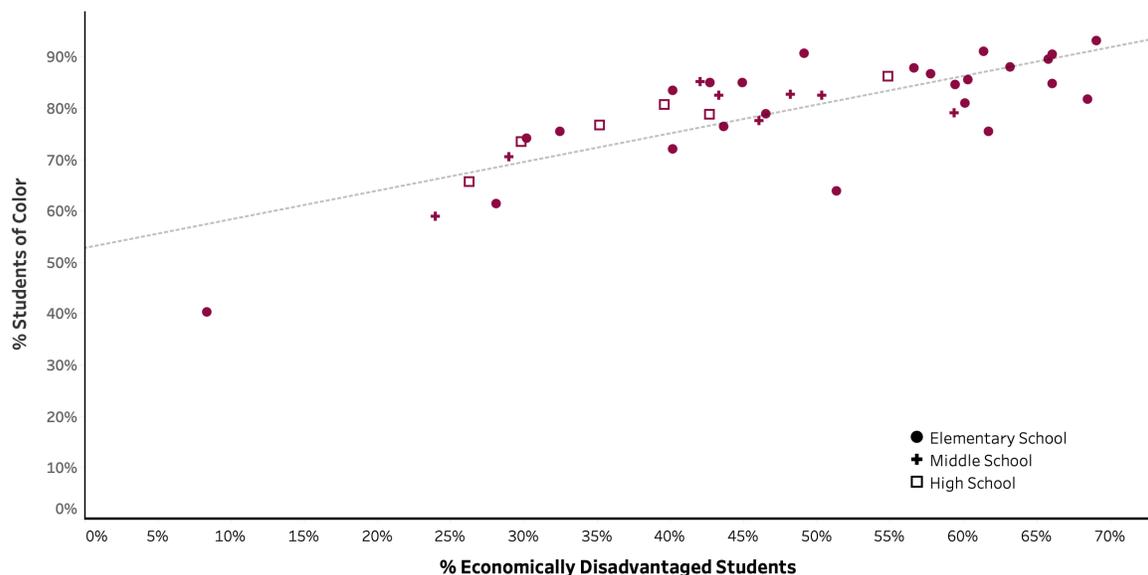
and attendance boundaries are drawn. Unless measures are taken to integrate students across economic lines intentionally, neighborhood poverty will continue to shape school demographics, leading to further segregation within the educational system.

[Click here to explore the school demographics in Las Cruces](#)

Exploring Equity: Poverty and Race in Education

One critical issue with economically segregated schools is the correlation between socioeconomic status and race and ethnicity. Research indicates that schools with higher poverty rates often serve a larger percentage of students from historically marginalized groups. (3) In the United States, 38% of Hispanic students, 37% of African American students, and 30% of Native American students attend high-poverty schools, compared to 13% of Asian students and 7% of White students. A similar trend is evident in Las Cruces, where rising percentages of economically disadvantaged students in schools are closely linked to an increase in students of color.

Economic Disadvantage and Racial Composition in Las Cruces Schools, 2023



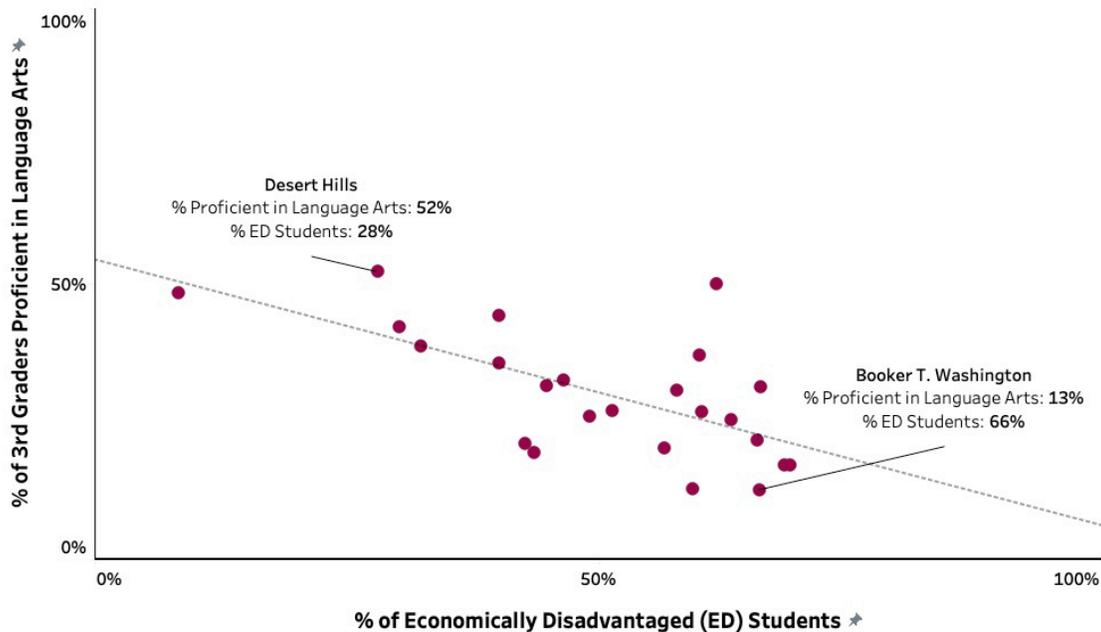
Note: The correlation coefficient = 0.778, $p < 0.0001$.

Source: New Mexico Public Education Department, 2023.

The strong link between poverty and race exacerbates the opportunity gap, significantly affecting educational outcomes. Students in under-resourced communities often encounter systemic challenges, such as limited access to educational resources, less experienced teachers, and fewer extracurricular activities, which can lead to lower proficiency rates. (4) Schools with higher concentrations of students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds typically face more challenges, contributing to cycles of disadvantage.

Our analysis of elementary schools in Las Cruces highlights the correlation between the percentage of ED students and third-grade Language Arts proficiency. The data shows a negative correlation (coefficient = -0.636, $p < 0.001$); proficiency decreases as the percentage of ED students increases. For example, schools like Booker T. Washington, with high ED rates, cluster at lower proficiency levels, while schools like Desert Hills and White Sands, with fewer ED students, rank higher.

Economic Disadvantage and 3rd Grade Language Arts Proficiency in Las Cruces Schools



Note: Dots represent elementary schools in Las Cruces. The correlation coefficient = -0.636, $p < 0.001$.

Source: New Mexico Public Education Department, ESSA data 2022, demographics 2023.

Unless measures are taken to integrate students across economic lines intentionally, neighborhood poverty will continue to shape school demographics, leading to further segregation within the educational system. Given this data, districts should carefully consider how they draw school attendance boundaries. Equitable boundary decisions can help balance the distribution of economically disadvantaged students across schools, ensuring more equal access to resources and opportunities. This approach is crucial for breaking the cycle of disadvantage and improving educational outcomes for all students.

Fostering Equity Through Inclusive School Boundaries and Housing Policies

Creating school boundaries that reflect the district's diverse demographics can foster more balanced and inclusive schools. Our city council can further support this effort by promoting inclusive housing policies, especially those that encourage mixed-income neighborhoods. By nurturing economically diverse communities, school districts and local governments can work together to ensure that all students, regardless of their background, have the opportunity to thrive in inclusive educational environments.

Research shows that diverse schools provide a range of benefits, including higher graduation rates, better test scores, and increased college enrollment. (5) Schools with high-poverty rates often face disparities in test scores in reading, writing, and math compared to those in low-poverty schools. Wealthier schools typically provide more challenging coursework, higher-quality teachers, and advanced classes, creating environments that foster student motivation and success. In contrast, schools in under-resourced communities often need more essential resources, making it challenging to achieve academic success. This educational disparity is closely tied to socioeconomic factors and can contribute to high dropout rates, perpetuating the cycle of poverty. Furthermore, students in diverse environments benefit from reduced stereotyping, enhanced critical thinking skills, and improved collaboration with peers from different backgrounds, equipping them to thrive in an increasingly diverse and interconnected world.

Redrawing the School Boundaries

A Redistricting Advisory Committee will take the lead in redefining the school boundaries for Las Cruces. This committee includes LCPS staff, parents, students, and members of the Board of Education. Their primary responsibility is to gather feedback from community stakeholders and collaborate with a consultant to establish new school boundaries. Two meetings are left to advise the drawing of the boundaries, which occur on **October 15th, 2024, and October 30th, 2024, between 5:30 pm and 7:30 pm**. Proposed changes will be presented to the LCPS Board of Education later this year. (6) Community engagement and input will be crucial as the committee begins its work. The decisions made during this process will significantly influence students' educational experiences throughout the district for years.

Final Thoughts

The LCPS redistricting process offers the opportunity to reduce overcrowding, balance student populations across schools, and create more equitable and inclusive educational opportunities for all students. By carefully considering neighborhood demographics, LCPS can establish fair boundaries that reflect the community's diversity. While LCPS cannot directly influence mixed-income housing, addressing socioeconomic factors is a crucial first step in advocating for such policies. This approach will help ensure that schools have equitable resources and opportunities for all students to thrive. Together, LCPS and the community can build a school system that is efficient, effective, and inclusive for everyone.

[Click here to explore the school demographics in Las Cruces](#)

Sources:

- (1) [Las Cruces schools to redraw boundaries, addressing overcrowding issues](#)
- (2) [LCPS School Attendance Zones and Neighborhood Segregation](#)
- (3) [Disparities in Students' Exposure to Racial, Ethnic, and Economic Segregation](#)
- (4) [24 Examples of Systemic Inequalities Experienced by Students of Color and Students from Under-Resourced Communities in U.S. Schools](#)

- (5) [How Racially Diverse Schools and Classrooms Can Benefit All Students](#)
- (6) [Committee Members Selected for Redistricting Effort](#)



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