



School Segregation in New Jersey

A pandemic of inequality & lost opportunity

Friday, September 24 • 10:00 am to 3:00 pm

The Conference Center at Mercer



Segregation is Sin

- It thwarts opportunity, harms our economy, divides our politics, & cuts short lives.
- *Integration* is simply the absence of segregation...a structure of “external containment”.
- It is rooted in discrimination, subjugation, oppression & exploitation.
- It is not a choice made by the segregated. It is a set of immoral laws & policies upheld by the powerful that limit choice, opportunity & life outcomes for the powerless.
- But immoral laws & policies can be changed by moral courage, a determined people & organized power.

A Framework for a Legislative
Approach to Ending School
Segregation in NJ
in Our Time

1. Must Involve Everyone

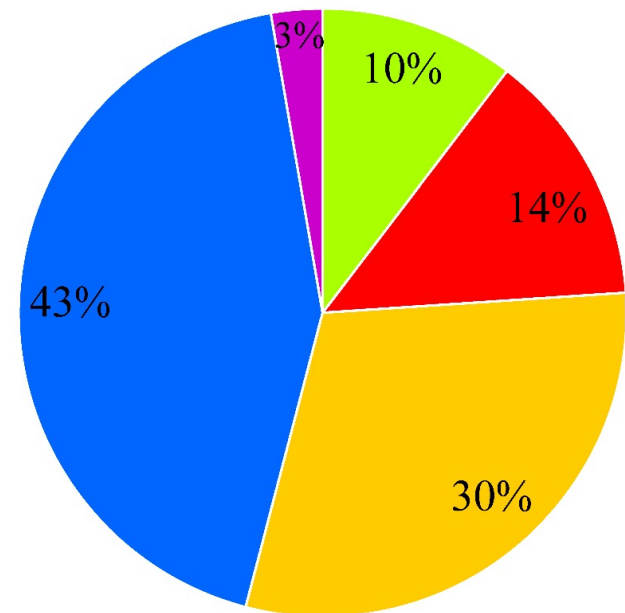
- *All districts bear some responsibility & all have a role to play.*
 - Shut off all doors to “flight”
 - Small scale or pilot projects will not work.
 - Must engage whole regions & be implemented statewide.

2. Set achievable & fair goals for inclusion & integration

- The aim should be to support, incentivize & require *all* districts, school buildings, & *classrooms* to better reflect the diversity of their regions & the state.

New Jersey Public School Students in 2020

■ Asian ■ Black ■ Hispanic ■ White ■ Other



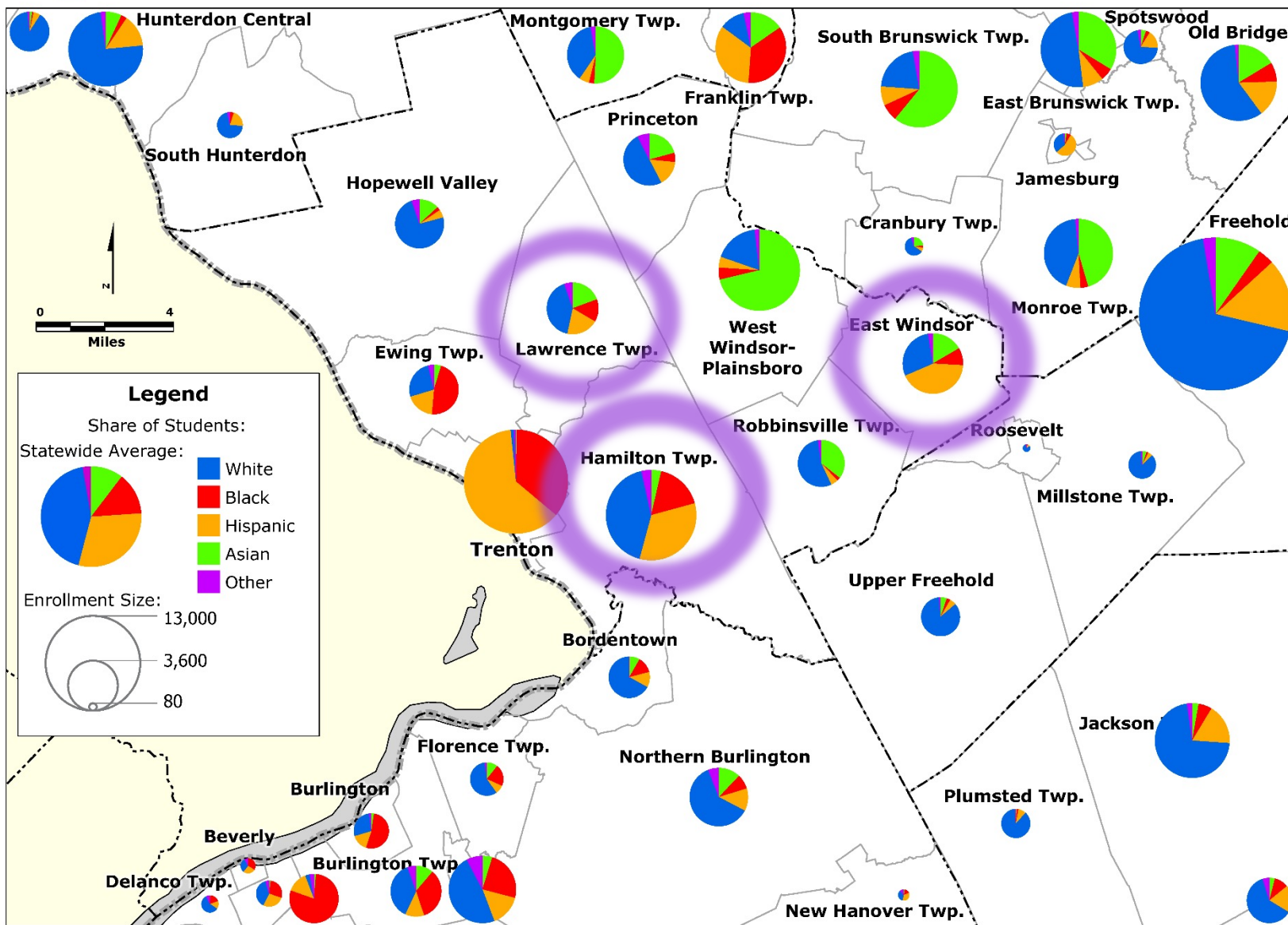
Following Maps Show where Some of our School Districts Compare to the State Demographics

- Trenton Region
- Atlantic City Region
- Camden Region
- Newark Region

Notice the districts that *mirror* the state's diversity.

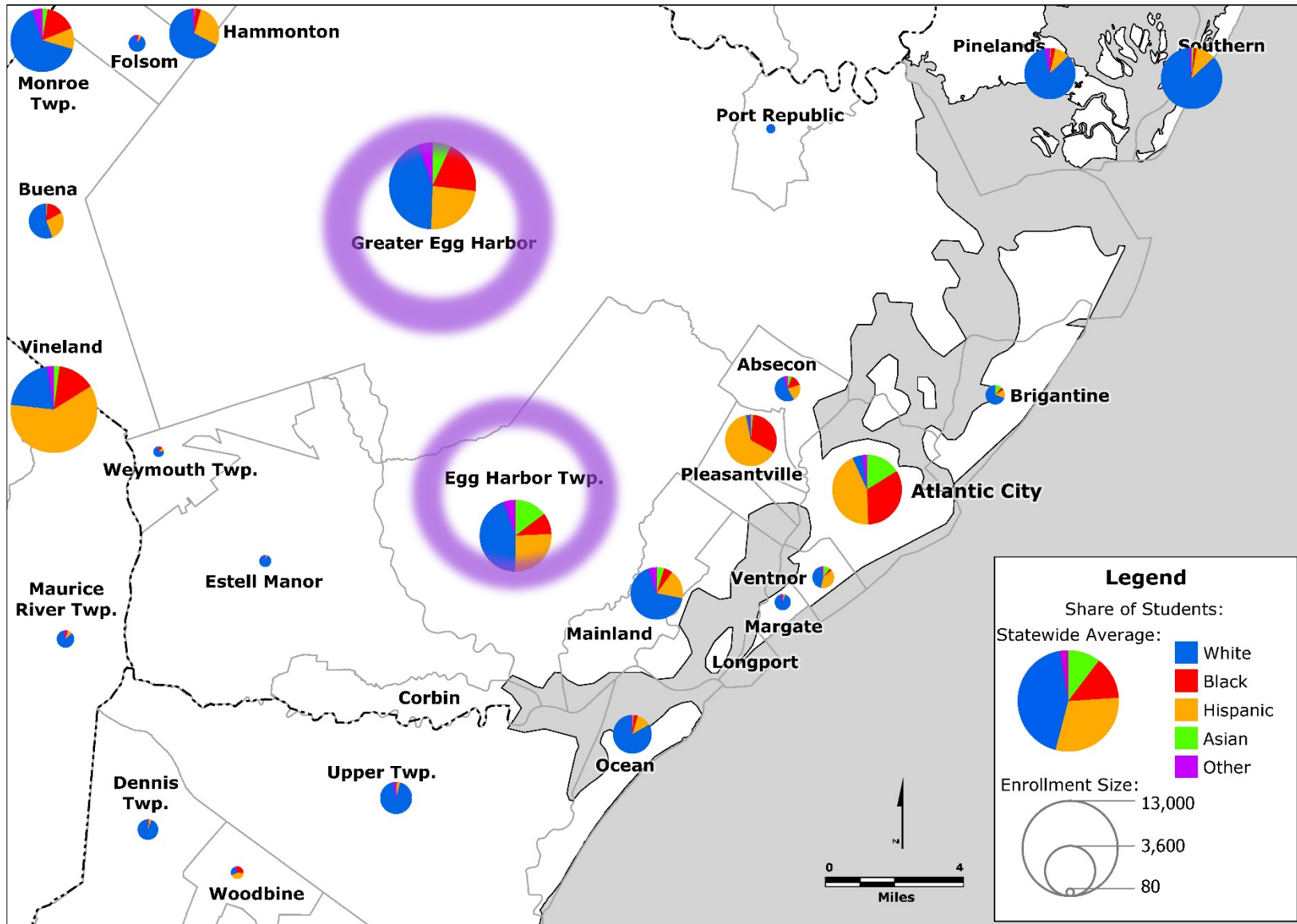
- An effective plan would help more districts look like more these places & help those places do a better job with integration & inclusion.

TRENTON, NEW JERSEY AREA Race of Public School Students by School Districts in 2019-2020

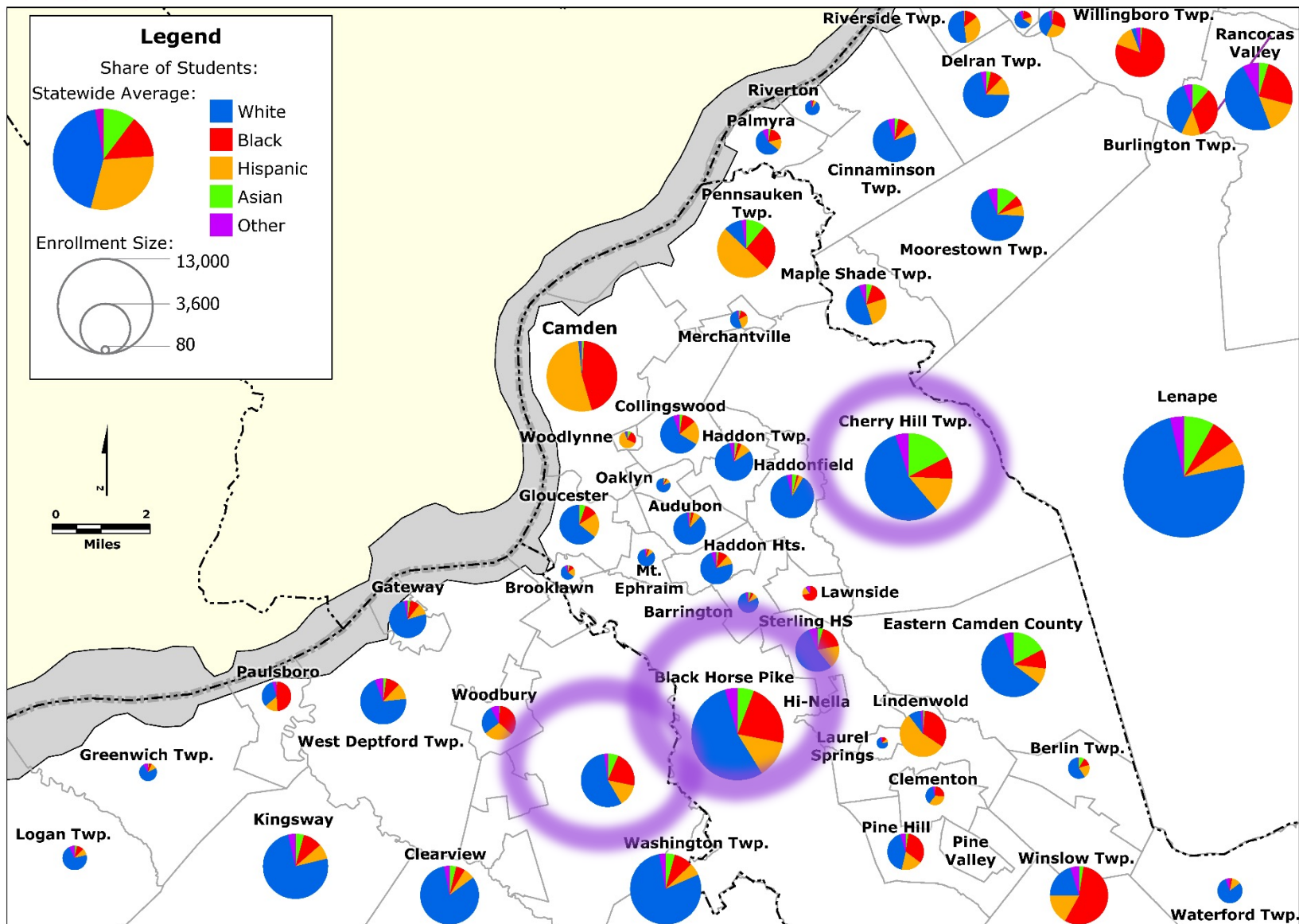


ATLANTIC CITY, NEW JERSEY AREA

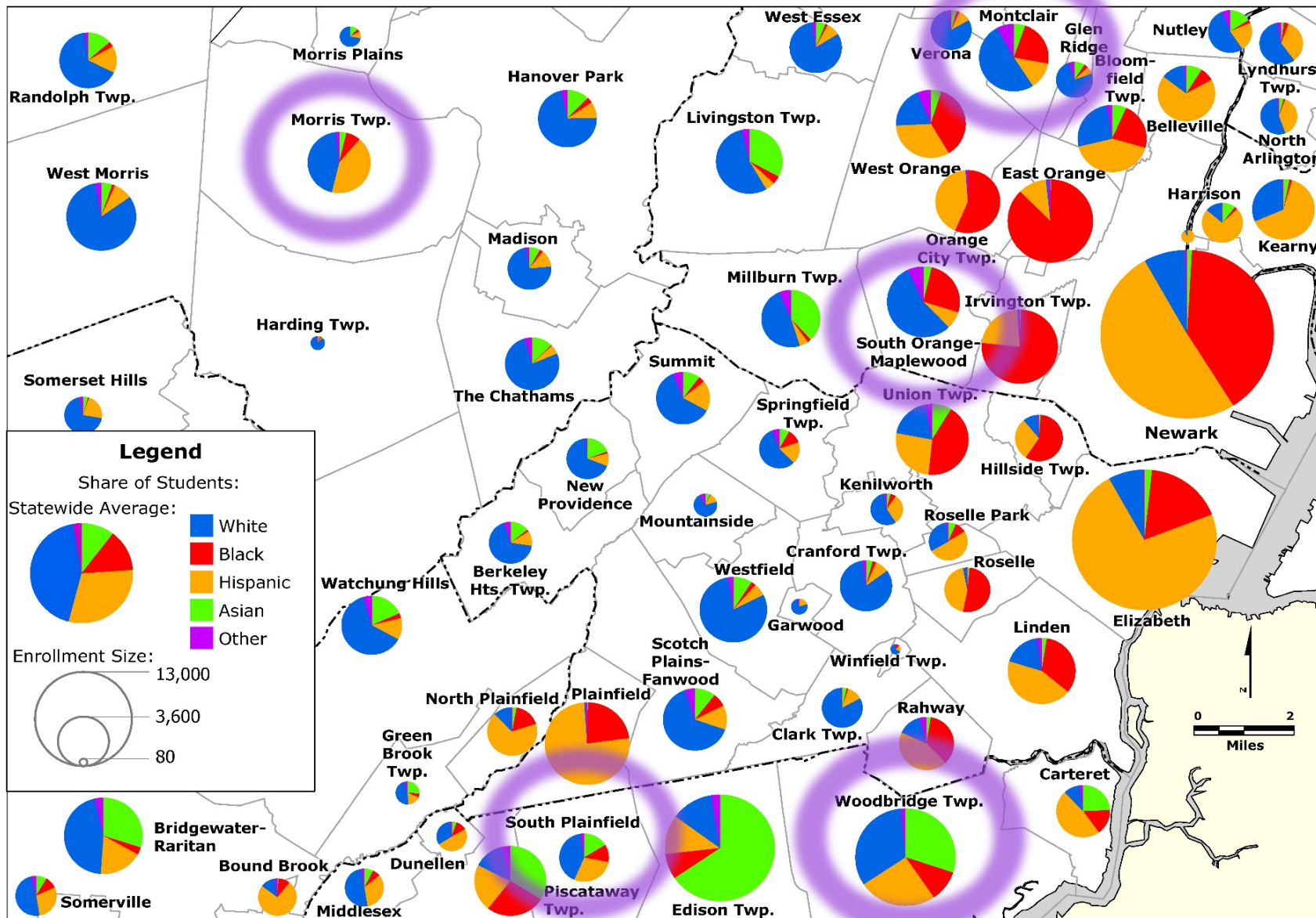
Race of Public School Students by School Districts in 2019-2020



CAMDEN, NEW JERSEY AREA Race of Public School Students by School Districts in 2019-2020



NEWARK- NORTH NEW JERSEY AREA Race of Public School Students by School Districts in 2019-2020



3. Goals must be based on *Opportunity* as well as race

Opportunity is defined by social & economic factors such as:

- Number of low income students
- Test scores
- Per Pupil Tax Capacity

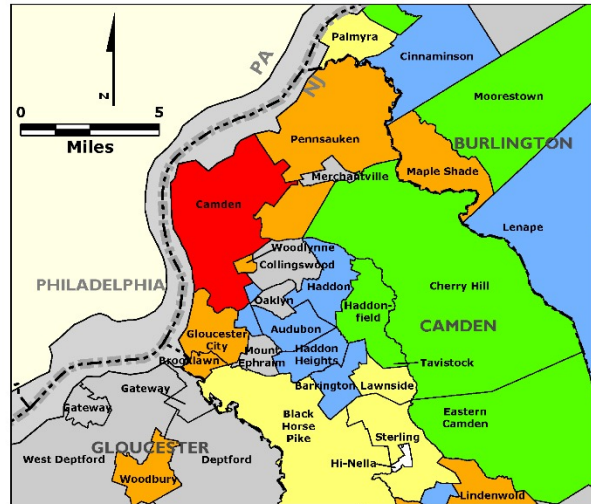
- The next map shows these *opportunity* factors by school district.

Green & Blue are *highest opportunity districts*
- few low-income students, best scores, highest
ratable base.

*High opportunity districts should have the
greatest obligation to meet regional inclusion &
integration goals.*

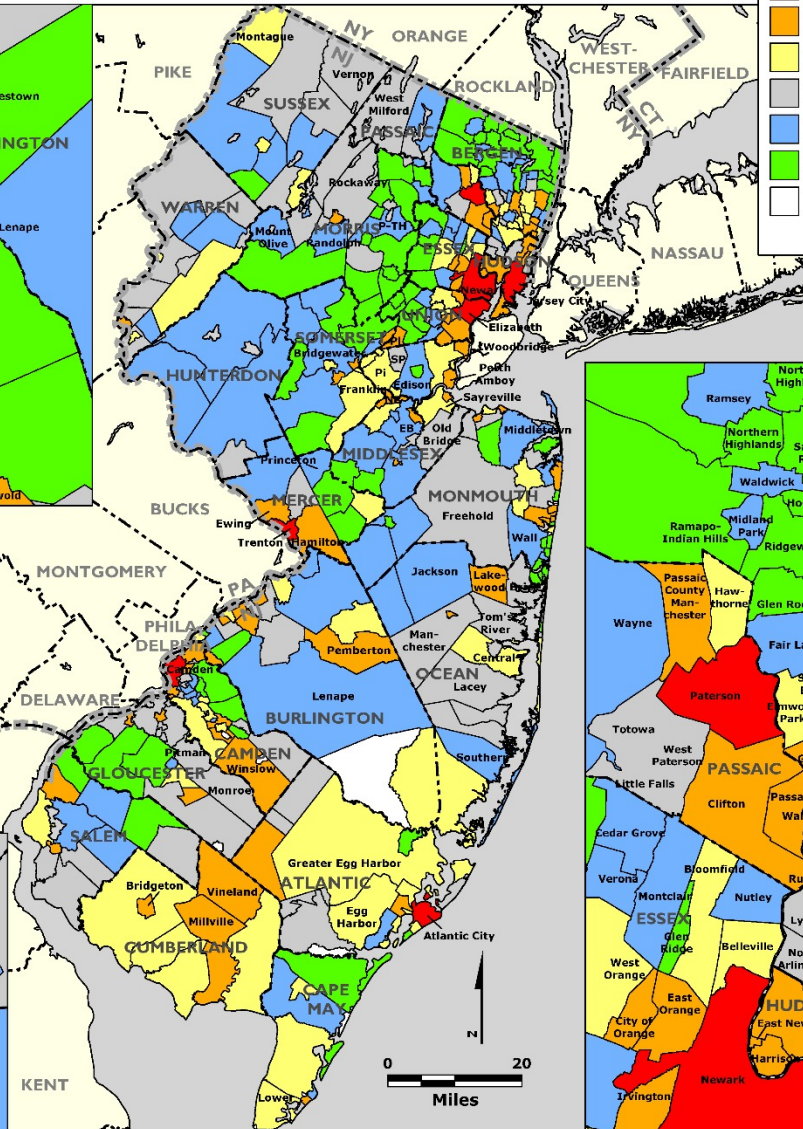
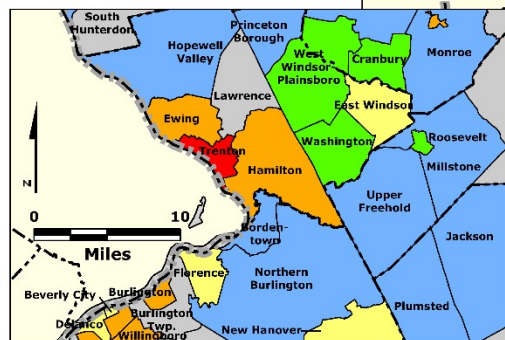
NEW JERSEY Opportunity Types of School Districts in 2020

Camden Area



EB East Brunswick
NB New Brunswick
P-TH Parsippany-Troy Hills
Pi Piscataway
PI Plainfield
SP South Plainfield

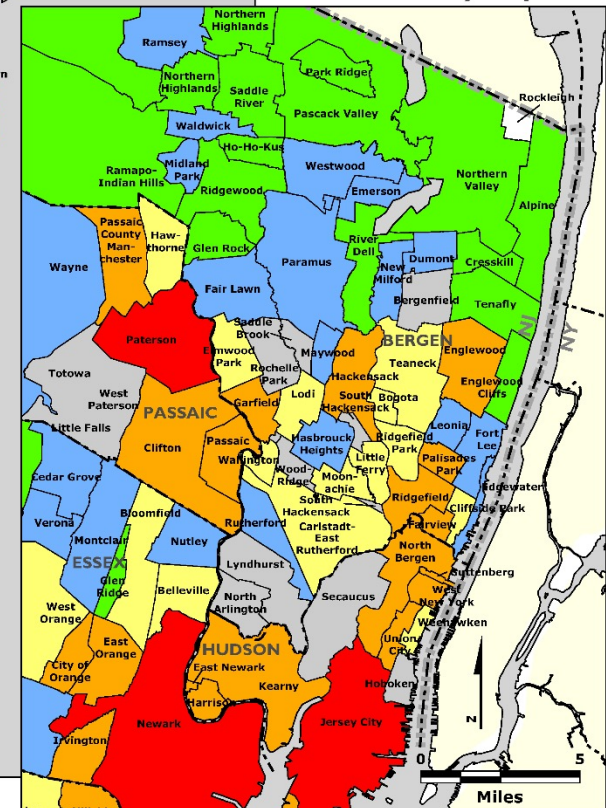
Trenton Area



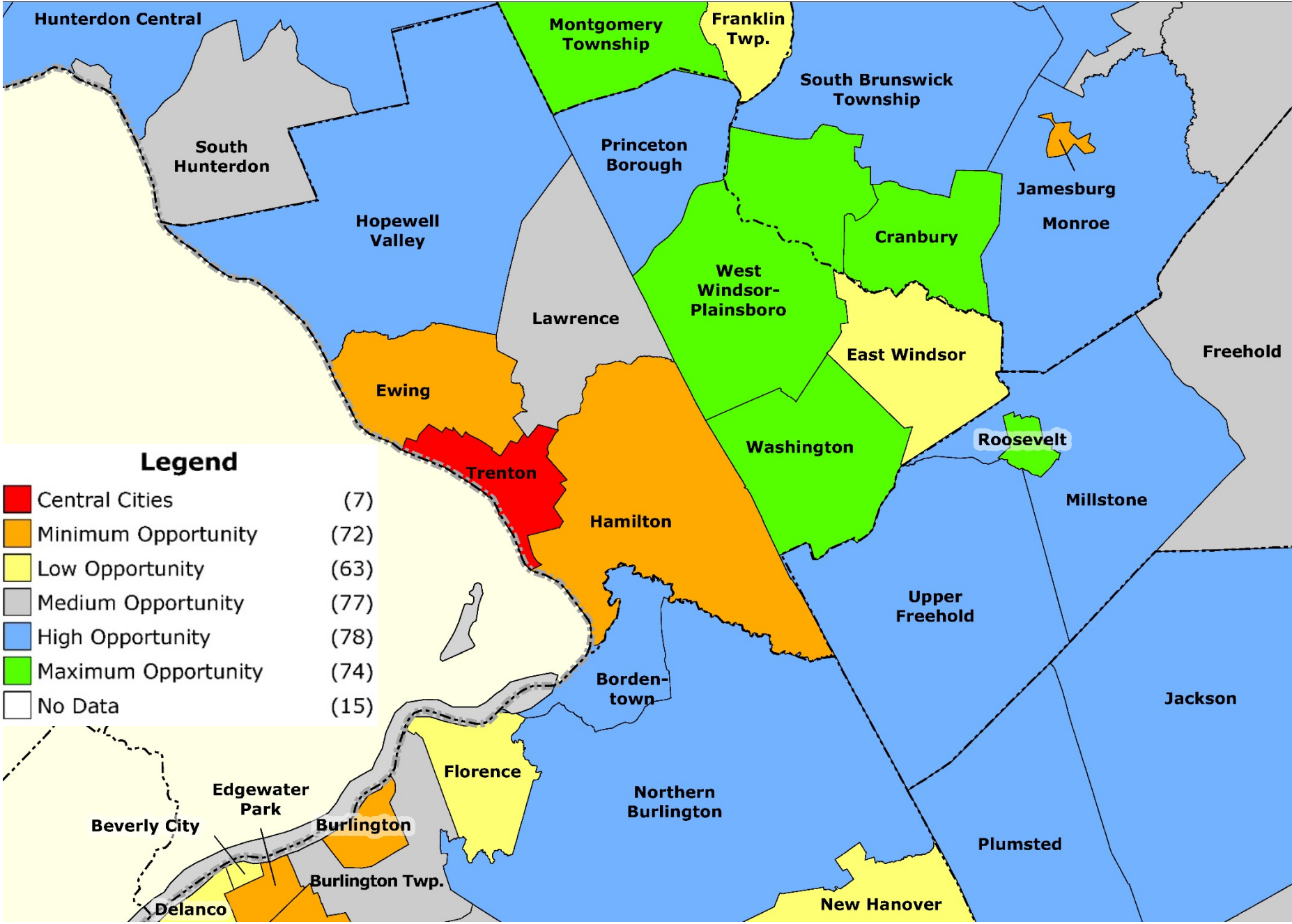
Legend

Central Cities	(7)
Minimum Opportunity	(72)
Low Opportunity	(63)
Medium Opportunity	(77)
High Opportunity	(78)
Maximum Opportunity	(74)
No Data	(15)

Newark- Jersey City Area



Data Source: National Center for Education Statistics,
New Jersey Department of Community Affairs.



4. Have a Combined Approach..

With a **diversity & opportunity** analysis, the state can employ multiple policy tools for meeting inclusion goals for every district, school & classroom. *Most already exist in NJ law...*

..but need reform:

- A strengthened school funding formula
- A reformed intra-district choice program
- A pro-integration magnet & county school program
- District & classroom level strategies & best practices
- Use fair housing goals & obligations
- A reformed School Consolidation bill
- Strengthen the Civil Rights capacity of the DOE

The School Funding Reform Act of 2008

- This system (when fully funded) does much to incentivize diversity & inclusion. *But it can do more.*
 - State aid should prioritize & advantage diverse districts
 - Funding should support strategies that foster inclusion *within* districts, schools & classrooms.
 - High poverty districts should not be penalized
 - Funding should only support high opportunity districts as they diversify.

Inter-District Public School Choice

- This program, in its current form, does not promote integration. But it can if it is reformed
 - If it is made mandatory for *high opportunity* districts that fall short of regional integration goals.
 - Spaces in these districts can be *prioritized* for students from the most segregated, high poverty districts

County School System & Magnet Schools

- County technical, trade & vocational schools often already serve as regional, more integrated, alternatives.
- *Regional goals for economic & racial balance should be required.*
- Legislation can be enacted to create & support **pro-integration regional magnet schools** in urban areas.
- Legislation must to require charters to also meet *regional* integration goals

Reform School Consolidation bill

- The new school consolidation bill **must be amended to:**
 - not allow withdrawals, separations or dissolutions as a part of any proposed consolidation plan.
 - Require an affirmative obligation to create a racially & socioeconomically integrated consolidated district.

Mount Laurel & New Jersey's Fair Housing Act

- Affordable housing should be included in goals for school & classroom integration.
 - Affluent districts who think they are too “far flung” to integrate can be required deepen their affordable housing obligation.

Bolster & Reform the Department of Education's Civil Rights Capacity

None of these measures can be made real without a strong state mandate & resources directed toward the achievement of integration goals.

- Legislation is needed to strengthen the Department of Education's civil rights capacity & enforcement requirements so that it is *charged* with & *capable of* carrying out school desegregation goals.
- It must have the capacity to conduct an ***Opportunity Analysis*** & develop inclusion goals for each district.

Caveats

1. **Avoid Short-Term Quick-Fixes** *Especially ones that settle for costly expenditures instead of true inclusion.*
2. **Don't Blame the Victim** - *NJ's high poverty & racially isolated districts did not create segregation, their students did not choose it. They should not be asked to bear the burden of fixing it.*
3. **Not all Suburban & Urban Districts are the Same** - *Recognize that Districts in New Jersey are more than just white or black; rich or poor; urban or suburban.*
4. **Do No Harm** - *The best intentions often bring unintended but harmful consequences.*
 - **County consolidation** will not capture a diverse enough area to impact segregation patterns.
 - Simply **removing district boundaries** would accelerate white flight & deepen segregation.
 - **Magnet & vocational schools** should not create a new layer of exclusivity & exclusion.
 - **Magnets**, as well as **charters**, must meet meaningful goals for reflecting the economic & racial mix of their region

School Integration Will Not Fix All Problems

- It's not a substitute for ending residential segregation, economic inequality & racial discrimination

But it is a *part* of the problem & a part we can do something about.

**This is a
beginning
framework.**

**A starting point
for developing
a policy agenda
in the next
legislative
session**

- We call on our members, allies & policy makers to join us in turning these ideas into bold & transformative legislation that will promote racial & economic opportunity for all families, children & communities.

Summary

- **Legislation is needed to reform & strengthen the Department of Education's** civil rights capacity & enforcement requirements so that it is both *charged* with & *able* to carry out school desegregation goals.
- **Conduct an *Opportunity Analysis*.** A desegregation plan must be based on a thorough analysis of racial as well as economic & social factors that define *opportunity*.
- Develop integration & inclusion goals based on *opportunity & diversity*.
- **Strengthen state funding formula to advantage & incentivize** diverse & integrated schools.
- Direct more funding to local **integration & desegregation *best practices*** where diversity already exists.
- Reform the *Interdistrict Public School Choice* program to advance integration within regions based on opportunity analysis.
- Provide for & **incentivizing integrated regional & consolidated schools**.
- Support **pro-integration magnet schools** in urban areas & for **county schools**.
- Reform legislation to **require charters to advance integration** not promote segregation.
- Increase & **enforce *Mount Laurel*** obligations on “far flung” high opportunity communities with exclusionary schools.