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Finding the Education Gap in Allen County  
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Abstract  
Education is an issue that affects us all. It is not something that you buy once and never use again, but rather an investment. It is something that no one can ever take away from you. Education allows for growth in all areas of life. Higher levels of education result in lower crime rates and boost the economy. The way that the United States attempts to offer a basic education to all citizens is through three years of elementary, middle, and high school education. However, this system has not always proven to afford the same opportunities to every student. Our country has had a long history of discrimination within education, from before Brown v. The Board of Education (1954), and continuing today. While courts and legislatures work to rectify this discrimination it is clear that minority students still face a less transparent battle in equal educational success. This inequity can be seen not only at a national level, but also at a local level here in Allen County.

My research focuses on educational outcomes in the Fort Wayne Community, East Allen County, Southwest Allen County, and Northwest Allen County school districts. I have analyzed different testing measures of the students such as SAT and ACT scores, diploma types, graduation rates, and other indicators that will determine a student’s success in education after high school. The data sets are from 2007 to 2011 and include the most recent data. This analysis of college success indicators show that minority students within our area schools, while improving, are still not achieving at rates that are equitable to their white counterparts. Moreover, Allen County students are not meeting benchmarks that are predictive of college success.

Method  
The four school districts in Allen County comprising eight high schools and thirty-two elementary schools were analyzed through the results of the students’ testing scores. Public schools published all SAT, AP, free or reduced lunch, ISTEP+, remediation rates, and diploma types. Private schools published only information on graduation rates, graduation rates, and diploma types. All of the information was obtained through the Indiana Department of Education, College Board, and Indiana Commission for Higher Education. State totals were also provided. The information was examined for the school years of 2007 through 2011, because these were the most recent years provided by the state at the start of the research. Job growth information, especially on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) statistics were obtained from the US Department of Labor, US Department of Commerce and Georgetown University.

Results  
In comparison to the national average, Indiana will see a nearly 9% increase in jobs across the state and in the STEM field. However, this is about 8% less than the national average. It is projected that there will be an increase from 105,560 jobs in 2008 to 115,740 jobs in 2018. With this increased amount of opportunities in the STEM field our high schools should also be reflecting a push towards these opportunities for all students. However, this is not what is seen in the performance data of the FWCs, EACS, SACS and NACS. The opportunities are diminished even more for minority students within these school districts. As a whole these four school districts have never seen more than 33% of the graduates from a given school continuing their education in the STEM field and have mostly been under 25% since 2007. These schools have seen an increase in overall graduation rates every year since 2007, especially with minority students, but these graduates are still failing to succeed on tests and in classes that prepare them for education beyond high school at much higher rates. As well as being under represented within these “college opportunities.”

Conclusions  
This information demonstrates that while Allen County schools are making improvements in some areas, there are still more improvements that are needed. A causal effect of this under performance due to urban flight. This occurs when a previously functioning and thriving community begins to fail. In the 1950’s and 60’s a similar trend was seen with white flight. White flight consists of residents leaving their communities, because of minority residents moving into their communities. The white residents moved into the suburban areas taking with them the prosperity that was feeding into that community’s economy and education system. Schools were later required to begin bussing students from the suburban areas into the city schools. This was intended to rectify this issue, but by looking at trends in Allen County we can still see there is still a disproportionate representation. The four school districts in Allen County, FWCs and EACS are also the most under performing schools. Both of these communities average household incomes are significantly lower than SACS and NACS. From the 2010 Census FWCs average household income was $41,356 and EACS as at $51,650; compared with NACS and SACS was at $78,560 and $55,673 respectively. Another factor that makes the blight evident is the population growth. Both FWCs and EACS saw a decrease in population by 13.3% and 6.62; whereas NACS and SACS saw a significant increase of 32.77 and 16.66.

Finally, this information also demonstrates that Allen County and Indiana are not competitive with our surrounding states. Indiana ranks 49th out of 51 states including the District of Columbia in SAT rankings. The map below provides us surrounding states SAT results for 2011. Indiana is nearly 200 points behind the next closest state of Ohio. This is leaving our students drastically falling behind and unable to be competitive for jobs in our region. In order to make our students competitive for these jobs we must work at fixing these inequalities in our education system.